

Mobilizing the High Line

By

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ABSTRACT

One of the foremost icons of contemporary urban planning, design and redevelopment is New York's world-renowned High Line. A 1.45-mile-long elevated linear park on the West Side of Manhattan in New York City, built upon a long-disused 1930s commercial rail viaduct, it has been praised as a design masterpiece, a public space innovation, and an economic development juggernaut. As an iconic project in a major world city, the High Line has also had considerable influence on urban planning, design, and development practices in cities around the globe. An ever-growing literature on the mobility and diffusion of planning has taken a keen interest in how ideas, models and policies like the High Line circulate and land. This research builds upon that work to investigate how the High Line has been mobilized into a phenomenon that can travel and how it influences practices around the world.

As the High Line's industrial past helps establish its current appeal as a reused urban artifact, this research begins with the structure's history. Once a symbol of modernity and progress, the High Line's postindustrial obsolescence transformed it from an asset to a liability. This transformation is a starting point for understanding the process by which the obsolete High Line, at one point believed to be an impediment to urban revitalization, could be re-envisioned as the centerpiece of a revitalized neighborhood. The process of building excitement and developing narratives, as well as its location in a capital of media, fashion, and finance, was integral in its mobilization. Probing the formation of the High Line's mobilization through its imagery and narratives in globalized media and discourse, I argue that the High Line that is

mobilized can be thought of as a ‘traveling urban imaginary.’ What really travels is a flattened, constructed, and aspirational phenomenon. Moving beyond the original site, the research develops a kind of High Line ‘family tree’ to map out the reach of the phenomenon and how it has been discursively constructed in the places it lands. Additional examination of ‘ancestors’ (such as the Promenade Plantée and Garden Bridge) and ‘descendants’ (such as the Reading Viaduct and Goods Line) reveals the continuities and discontinuities between the High Line in New York and the High Line that has become a mobilized phenomenon.

This detailed investigation of the High Line as a real place and a mobilized phenomenon provides insights into the process of mobilization for contemporary exemplars of urban planning, design, and redevelopment. It reveals that while formal networks for policy and idea transfer (such as the Urban Land Institute and American Planning Association) still played important roles, contemporary global media and communications, along with other factors, played an outsized role in mobilizing the High Line and making it part of both professional and non-professional ‘repertoires’. This contemporary dynamic accentuates the importance of the stories, narratives, and imaginaries by which the High Line is transferred, and the power dynamics and political projects that they carry. It probes why they have such strong influences on urban practices and politics, and argues for more reflective, careful consideration of such mobilized phenomena, particularly by professionals such as urban planners and designers.

Chapter I **Introduction: Investigating a Contemporary Mobilized Urban
Revitalization Phenomenon**

Let's go downtown and watch the modern kids

Let's go downtown and talk to the modern kids

- "Rococo" (Arcade Fire, 2010, track 5)

The High Line is a 1.45-mile-long elevated linear park on the West Side of Manhattan in New York City, built upon a long disused 1930s commercial rail viaduct. It is also among the leading urban revitalization practices circulating the globe today. The High Line's first phase opened in 2009 to packed crowds and rave reviews from around the world. The second and third phases, which opened in 2011 and 2014, respectively, garnered similar fanfare and media coverage. From the moment it opened, the High Line has been praised as a design masterpiece, a public space innovation, and an economic development juggernaut. Today the park receives over 6 million visitors a year (Pogrebin, 2015). It is also lauded for its economic impact, raising property values, increasing tax collections and helping to catalyze a building boom in the surrounding neighborhoods. New York City Mayor Bloomberg claimed that by June of 2011 the High Line, and the development projects it sparked, had created 8,000 construction jobs and 12,000 permanent jobs in the area (McGeehan, 2011, p. A.18). In 2012, the New York City Planning Department reported that "in the five years since construction started on the High Line, 29 new projects had been built or [were] underway in the neighborhood" and "[m]ore than 2,500 new residential units, 1,000 hotel rooms and over 500,000 square feet of office and art gallery

have gone up” (Goodsell, 2012). In 2014, according to the New York City Economic Development Corporation, since rezoning, the area had added 1,374 housing units, with 132 of them affordable housing, and just under 500,000 square feet of new commercial space (“The High Line,” 2014). One study of properties within two miles of the High Line showed that in 2010, after the opening of the High Line, the nearby properties rose 18% in value (Levere, 2014, p. 17). In the total study area, an overall 7% increase in property values meant an estimated increase in tax collections for the City of New York of \$100 million a year (Levere, 2014, p. 22). Today it is likely much more.

The High Line’s making and success were an internationally recognized phenomenon. As a *Wall Street Journal* reporter noted, the High Line has become “one of the world’s best-known urban-renewal projects” (Kwaak, 2014). It is hard to overstate the excitement and attention the High Line has provoked in the press and wider public discourse. Even the casual observer of urbanism and urban development will likely be familiar with the project – few other urban projects have made for debate in the Opinion section of the *New York Times* on multiple occasions (J. Moss, 2012; Rybczynski, 2011). Various media and discourses have heralded the High Line as an innovation, a masterpiece of design, a redevelopment catalyst, a new form of public space and so much more. Arguably, it deserves much praise. It is both a truly enjoyable experience and a major investment in public open space that has sparked the imagination of people around the world for remaking their urban environments. As the architecture critic of the *Philadelphia Enquirer* said in a review after the opening of the second section of the High Line, it “may turn out to be the most influential work of architecture completed during the boom years, the Guggenheim Bilbao of its decade. Every city wants one” (Saffron, 2011).

Seeing the same global impact, Michael Sorkin has called the High Line a “species of the Bilbao effect,” (personal communication, September 19, 2014). Like the Guggenheim Bilbao, a leading urban redevelopment project of the last two decades that is predicated on a high-design museum as the centerpiece and catalyst of urban revitalization and international attention (e.g., Gomez, 1998; Gonzalez, 2010; McNeill, 2012), the High Line has become an international touchstone for urbanism. Soon after the successful opening of the High Line’s first phase, the news media began to cover how it was influencing urban redevelopment and revitalization practices and ideas around the world. But even before it was completed, the High Line, covered by international media outlets in New York, was influencing ideas and practices elsewhere. Not long after the first phase of the High Line opened to massive crowds, the *New York Times* ran a front-page story covering its international influence. Reporter Kate Taylor identified how the project’s success had encouraged “other cities to look up”: “The High Line’s success, its improbable evolution from old trestle into glittering urban amenity, has motivated a whole host of public officials and city planners to consider or revisit efforts to convert relics from their own industrial past into potential economic engines” (2010b, p. A1). Taylor describes how interested developers, planners, and city officials from such seemingly disparate places as Rotterdam, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Jerusalem sought to understand the High Line as a model for their own cities. A project manager from James Corner Field Operations, the lead landscape architect of the High Line, marveled that giving tours to interested parties from around the world could be a full-time job in itself (Taylor, 2010b, p. A28).

As its star has since shone even brighter, the High Line has gone on to influence not just the reuse of existing and similar infrastructures, but a host of unrelated types of infrastructure and even ideas for new construction. It has become a contemporary phenomenon that

exemplifies the global exchange of ideas, policies and practices and represents the politics and imaginaries of urbanism in its particular historical moment. But to turn a real place or practice into a global phenomenon that can travel or move requires “translation” (Czarniawska-Joerges & Sevón, 2005).

Mobilities and Traveling

The High Line is not just a project, but a phenomenon that has been “*mobilized*” – turned into something that can travel and that influences ideas and practices regarding urban development, design, and planning in urban (and some non-urban) places around the world. Understanding mobilized ideas, policies and practices has become an important part of contemporary urban research in the era of hyper-globalization. It is the hallmark of globalization that goods, ideas, power (often in the form of policy) and capital are mobilized and ‘move.’ Ideas about urban form and management have circulated since ancient times through trade, travel, and empire. Eras of colonialism introduced new and altered systems of policy and idea transfer, particularly in relation to power (King, 1980; Ward, 2000). Several well-known works have tackled the spread of planning ideas in the modern era (see Hall, 2002; Rodgers, 1998; Sutcliffe, 1981). But while the circulation of ideas and policies is far from new, it has intensified and accelerated with the forces of globalization (McCann & Ward, 2010). A ‘turn toward mobilities’ (Cresswell, 2011a) in urban geography, policy and planning has increased interest in the contemporary processes and impact of interconnected ideas and policies that ‘move.’ Scholars use many different terms to describe this notion of ‘moving,’ for instance: ‘traveling,’ ‘diffusion,’ ‘policy transfer,’ or ‘best from one place to another by some means. But the use of a variety of metaphors indicates real differences in perspectives on, and understanding of, the process. Likewise, to investigate contemporary mobilized ideas, policies, and practices like the

High Line, it is helpful to first look broadly at the various literatures. This is important both to identify what is new and different about the contemporary mobilization and spread of the High Line from past phenomenon that have spread (or traveled), and to develop insights about the process of urban planning, design, and development.

Diffusion of Planning

A longstanding literature concerned with how planning and policy ideas and practices diffuse and transfer from one place to another falls into the category of “diffusion of planning.” Initial work in the diffusion of planning focused on the spread of technical-rational planning under the banner of progress and modernity (Rogers, 2003; Ross & Homer, 1976). “Diffusion theory” in planning and urban geography “concern[ed] the spread of a phenomenon through a population over space and through time” (Alves & Morrill, 1975, p. 290). In keeping with the concepts of technical-rational planning, it was seen as an instrument to improve planning models as well as a means of “[disseminating] knowledge and encouraging use of existing or planning facilities [i.e., tools and practices]” and “inculcating in a population some desired change in attitude” (Alves & Morrill, 1975, p. 290). While technical-rational diffusion models still exist (some would consider actor-network theory to be in that vein), the literature has taken a turn away from “progress and innovation” to structuralist/post-structuralist concerns about the role of power and control in the diffusion of ideas and policies (Healey, 2012).

An significant early work dealing with the distinct modes of diffusion-transfer that shed the banner of innovation and the march toward modernity is Stephen Ward’s (2000) chapter on “Re-examining the international diffusion of planning.” In his re-examination, Ward reviews urban historians’ work on the international transfer of modern planning ideas and develops an early typology of planning diffusion. He identifies two key works in urban planning history that

inform this concept: Peter Halls' *Cities of Tomorrow* (2002) and Anthony Sutcliffe's *Towards the Planned City* (1981). Both works, along with other histories focused on more specific geographies that Ward credits, chronicle how modern planning ideas have been developed, transferred, and contextualized (or not) among different countries and regions. Ward identifies three major concerns in the literature chronicling the history of planning diffusion: 1) the "mechanism of diffusion," 2) "[t]he extent to which ideas and practices are changed in their diffusion" and 3) "[t]he fundamental causation of diffusion" (2000, p. 42). These three concerns regarding the dynamics of diffusion-transfer, while modified and evolving, are important foundations for mobilities. Looking at the historical literature, Ward concludes that diffusion "needs to be understood as highly variable, rather than a single uniform process" (2000, p. 43). Though there is no one process of diffusion-transfer, Ward does identify general patterns in history from which he develops a "typology of diffusion." This typology is divided into two main types: "borrowing" and "imposition," where "the essential basis of the typology is that of context, specifically the power relationship between the countries of originating and receiving" (Ward, 2000, pp. 44–45). Different power relationships between nations and local skills, abilities, traditions, and understandings lead to different types of borrowing and imposition. The level of contextualization of an idea or policy is highly influenced by the typology of diffusion. Ward's chapter is covered in detail here because it represents a shift to thinking more broadly about how planning ideas and practices travel between countries, forming an important base for the concept of mobile urbanism.

Policy Transfer

A parallel literature that is foundational to mobilities is policy transfer. The policy-transfer literature, which also uses the terms 'diffusion' and 'transfer' interchangeably at times,

is interested in how and why policies transfer between places. Peck (2011) provides a useful overview. Policy transfer begins with the understanding that there is a ‘market for policy innovations’ made up of producers and consumers. Policymakers are construed “as an optimizing, rational actor, scanning the ‘market’ for potential policy products, along with the modernist conception of effective or superior policies diffusing (first and fastest) across jurisdictional spaces” (Peck, 2011, p. 775). The focus is not on the content of policy, “but instead on the strength of the connections between state policy-making systems, the formation of communication channels, and the geographical distribution of ‘competent staff, superior clerical facilities, and supporting services’” (Peck, 2011, p. 776). Or, as Stone frames it, “the decision-making elite . . . import innovatory policy developed elsewhere in the belief that it will be similarly successful in a different context” (1999, p. 52).

Paralleling Ward’s work on modes of diffusion, the policy-transfer literature has developed its own typologies for modes of transfer. A key work by Dobbin, Simmons and Garrett has created four types or theories: “constructivism,” “coercion,” “competition theory” and “learning” (2007). Constructivism and coercion respectively track with Ward’s typologies of borrowing and imposition. Of note in their typology, non-coercive policies can take hold and spread reflexively: “[O]nce new policies reach a certain threshold of adoption, others will come to take the policy for granted as necessary and will adopt it whether or not they have need of it” (Dobbin et al., 2007, p. 454). Delving more into questions of post-colonial power, their coercive typological subtype “hegemonic ideas” describes a process where “dominant ideas become rationalized, often with elegant theoretical justifications, and influence how policy makers conceptualize their problems and order potential solutions” (Dobbin et al., 2007, p. 456). Adding to Ward’s colonialist typologies, Dobbins et al.’s typology of competition sees policy transfer as

driven by the need to compete for global capital or institutional funding. This reflects the neoliberal, market-driven turn in policy and is an important addition to understandings of policy transfer. Another typology added by Dobbin et al. is learning, which “occurs when new evidence changes our beliefs” (2007, p. 460). This mode focuses specifically on rationality and knowledge in policy making, a key underlying debate in the mobile-urbanism literature that will be covered next.

Others have added to Dobbin et al.’s framework in policy transfer. One concept that is germane to this research topic “oligarchic diffusion” (M. P. Smith, Koikkalainen, & Casanueva, 2013). In this mode, wealthy individuals or “billionaire driven policy networks” use their financial and political power to set policy agendas. Two forms of oligarchic diffusion are theorized, “indirect” and “direct.” Indirect oligarchic diffusion pushes general ideas and movements through well-funded advocacy campaigns and elite networks. Examples include the Bill Gates educational foundation and Rupert Murdoch’s policy advocacy (M. P. Smith et al., 2013, p. 7). In direct oligarchic diffusion, the rich and powerful push a specific policy, often in a specific place. For example, the article investigates Michael Bloomberg’s promotion and backing of a conditional cash transfer program copied from rural Mexico that was unsuccessfully imported to New York City (M. P. Smith et al., 2013). While direct oligarchic diffusion is likely a rare relative of other forms of transfer, it is a mode worth considering, and Smith et al.’s article develops some interesting insights about diffusion: “Oligarchic diffusion’s defining feature is its lack of democratic accountability: It is hard to say no to rich, powerful actors. Their projects chosen to justify their power and symbolize their policy efficacy may override the usual democratic debate that might raise questions about the appropriateness of policy borrowings” (M. P. Smith et al., 2013, p. 7).

As the progression of ideas in policy transfer covered above might lead one to suspect, a turn towards questioning the underlying dynamics of rationality and power in policy transfer is crucial to contemporary understandings. Increasingly, scholars argue that in reality policy transfer is “saturated by power relations” (Peck, 2011, p. 791) and “[p]olicy ‘learning’ . . . [is] normatively pre-filtered” (Peck, 2011, p. 778). For example, Wolman has documented that when policymakers seek out policies from other contexts, they are seldom truly engaged in a technical-rational analysis, instead participating in a kind of pageant for a particular set of policies:

Visiting ministers, civil servants and fact-finding groups see what they are shown. They are, perhaps inevitably, exposed much more to the views of advocates . . . than the views of critics or neutral observers. They tend to be shown ‘showcase’ examples rather than average situations . . . They will rely more on verbal information than on written material and rarely on analytical written material. (2005, pp. 32–33)

This example indicates that the rational actor conception built into much policy analysis is flawed, at least with respect to policy transfer, and, in turn, the processes by which policies are transferred in practice needs further examination. In this light, concepts like “best practices,” “good practice,” “policy innovation,” and other related concepts that are part and parcel of policy transfer and diffusion can be seen as dripping with power, contradictions and contingencies. Concerns about rationality, power and the conceptual basis of policy transfer underlie the movement to a concept of ‘mobile urbanism.’

Mobile Urbanism

The more contemporary concept of mobile urbanism brings together the policy-transfer and planning-diffusion lines of inquiry, expanding and refining them into a more flexible and holistic conception of how ideas and policies for urban places are constructed, are legitimized,

move, and change (in a process often termed mobility-mutation). McCann and Ward (2012) envision mobile urbanism as a multidisciplinary effort drawing upon many types and modes of research. Four key concepts underlie the turn to mobile urbanism. First is the concept of policy assemblages, which views cities as the results of processes. Cities are conceptualized as “assemblages of parts, near and far, of fixed and mobile pieces of expertise, regulation, institutional capacities, etc. that are brought together in particular ways and for particular purposes” (McCann & Ward, 2012, p. 338). In this dynamic view cities are ever changing, so each is unique and they are not interchangeable. However, this view should not be confused with advocating “radical uniqueness” for cities, which Beauregard has convincingly warned against (Beauregard, 2011). Cities are at once seen as part of a large, integrated system and unique assemblages of parts of that system.

Second, mobile urbanism emphasizes relational and territorial understandings where sites of transfer are “unbounded” in their relations and interact through multiple levels and channels (McCann & Ward, 2012, p. 327). This takes the focus off relationships between nations as in planning diffusion or more formal networks in policy transfer and prompts a rethinking of how places interrelate and the relationships that exist among them. Third, policies are seen as fluid and dynamic (mobile and mutating), and “mobility and mutation would appear to be simultaneous processes” (Peck, 2011, p. 781). This view complicates the linear conceptions embedded in some policy-transfer and diffusion-of-planning concepts that rely on identifying replication of policies and ideas. Lastly and importantly, mobile urbanism sees policies and ideas as social-constructivist, as opposed to positivist-rationalist. This approach “problematizes politics of knowledge practices” (Peck, 2011, p. 775), raising questions of both power and

rationality in the transfer of policies and ideas as well as in the legitimization of the content of policies and ideas that are transferred.

This last issue stems from the way that policies and ideas typically require the construction of abstract models and exemplars to be mobilized. In the creation of cities and projects as models, individual, real, complex assemblages are flattened:

Here we are not talking of literal movement but the figurative uprooting and making mobile of certain places as referential components of particular models, for example the ‘Barcelona model’ of urban regeneration, or the ‘Vancouverism’ model of urban design. There are numerous ways in which places in all their complexity are reduced to a particularly one-dimensional ‘model’ that is then moved by policy actors. The representational or discursive politics involved in this process is crucial to the circulation of policies, we suggest. (McCann & Ward, 2012, p. 329)

Linking back to Watson in the discussion of policy transfer, these models are not facsimiles of real places, but socially constructed narratives passed around as exemplary models and best practices. Clarke (2011) argues that constructing policies and ideas into “best practices” and “models” is inherently “anti-political.” Anti-politics in this regard is the use of models, best practices and the like as a discursive tool to provide a technical-rational basis for the elimination of political discourse. Claiming policies and practices as models or as bests stifles political discourse and development of alternatives, according to Clarke. It frames the consideration of alternatives or paths other than the “proven” one of established models and practices as futile, naive, or extreme.

Gonzales (2010) explores the concern for rationality and power in mobile urbanism in her work on “policy tourism.” Policy tourism is a central, though not required, process in mobile

urbanism. Policy tourists are policy professionals, politicians and other actors who go on “fact finding missions” or other types of excursions to “learn” from other contexts as models.

Gonzalez investigates how Barcelona and Bilbao (Spain) have become globally recognized models for urban regeneration and influences on those who seek to replicate the successes of these two cities at home. Analyzing the actions and interpretations of policy tourists provides important insights into mobile urbanism. First, relating again to Watson and policy transfer, Gonzales finds that “urban policy tourists learn particular lessons from their visits to these cities based on a stylized and partial version constructed by local authorities of what is happening, with none or very little engagement with more critical and alternative voices” (2010, p. 1413). Therefore, policy tourism is not a rational-technical fact-finding process, but a circumscribed vision of what local actors want to display.

Second, Gonzalez points out “that actors involved in the policy tourism business do not just belong to the formal sphere of state (bureaucrats, politicians, etc.), but expand to incorporate other communities such as researchers, interest-groups, businesses and think-tanks” (2010, p. 1414). Transfer agents for policies and ideas are not a limited set, but a complex network of actors. Likewise, third, these actors construct a script out of their experience to promote it back home: “Stylised stories . . . through their diffusion and repetition, arguably become part of the script of ‘what works’ in urban regeneration—they become hegemonic and part of a wider code according to which some ideas are deemed possible and others are discarded” (Gonzalez, 2010, pp. 114–1415). As Clarke points out in his discussion of the anti-political, in socially constructing certain policies and ideas as the “successful” models, there is an underlying danger of limiting the imagination for alternative policies and ideas.

Fourth, is how “[a]ctors in the network [of policy tourism/mobile urbanism] adopt different power positions depending on their perceived status in the global urban hierarchy” (Gonzalez, 2010, p. 1410). Relational, de-territorialized concepts of mobile urbanism do not preclude new, non-territorial forms of power that create forms of imposition-like dynamics acting on “loser cities” seen as unsuccessful in the global hierarchy (Rousseau, 2009). Put otherwise, some cities are deemed successful and some are not – and “loser cities” feel pressured to adopt the signifiers of global success to gain a better place in the hierarchy and, of course, to attract capital, trade, and tourism.

As more research emerges about how mobile urbanism is produced, transferred, and rationalized, there is increasing interest in how policies and ideas mutate and what impact they have in situ. These concerns address issues of contextualization, or how mobile urbanism responds to and impacts the particular context it is transferred to and implemented within. Smith et al., in considering the failure of a hot policy idea transferred by oligarchic diffusion, identify poor recognition of the “policy problematic of varying local contexts” (M. P. Smith et al., 2013, p. 16). They criticize how the mobilization of policy “placed far more emphasis on launching new initiatives putatively modeled on other places than on learning from local experience” (M. P. Smith et al., 2013, p. 22). Taking a somewhat different perspective, Healey (2010) and Friedmann (2010) describe the process of contextualization as how ideas and policies “land.” Healey and Friedmann remain hopeful of a pragmatic learning process in mobile urbanism and do not discount the potential for positive learning and adaptation produced by flows of ideas and policies. However, they do see cause for concern about contextualization of mobile ideas and policies as well. Healey expresses concern about

. . . what lies inside the ‘Trojan horse’ of an imported idea and [the potential to] miss the seductive colonizing voice that lies within the circuit that carries an idea into a new context. In other words, promoting innovation and experimentation without attention to shrewd probing and time for learning, before and through experience, not only increases the risks of regressive failure (causing more harm than good) but may encourage the penetration of new hegemonies, rather than releasing progressive tendencies honed to local aspirations and contingencies. (2013, p. 1522)

This concern about the weak contextualization of mobilized policies and ideas, as well as their ability to push out locally embedded old and new learning and practices, requires more investigation. Again, drawing on Healey’s insights, research on this topic must “tell rich stories and . . . probe in more insightful and critical ways, so that we can ‘see’ our complex interconnected world or worlds and emerging futures more perceptively and learn better how to act in them to achieve progressive, if diverse, development outcomes” (2013, p. 1523). Or, drawing on Jennifer Robinson’s work in comparative urbanism, we should question the power of mobile ideas and policies, instead striving to understand all cities “to be diverse, creative, modern and distinctive, with the possibility to imagine (within the not inconsiderable constraints of contestations and uneven power relations) their own futures and distinctive forms of city-ness” (2002, p. 546).

Urban Redevelopment/Revitalization/Regeneration

The High Line was a tool of urban redevelopment and, in most cases, lands as such in other contexts. Though it carries meanings and political projects as a mobilized idea, practice, and policy, it does not operate outside the political economy of urban redevelopment. At its core, urban redevelopment is the idea that an existing urban fabric, now considered obsolete or

degraded (or just underperforming economically), needs to be modernized and improved to provide enhanced economic and social benefits. Redevelopment of cities goes by a number of common names: urban renewal, urban regeneration, urban revitalization or simply urban redevelopment. The terms are generally interchangeable in the literature, though each term has slightly different connotations or focus depending on the context or authors. Some scholars dislike the term ‘urban redevelopment,’ particularly in the European context, as it implies an overriding focus on physical development and is often associated with residential displacement (Dalla Longa, 2014, pp. 13–14). Nonetheless, in this globally framed research project that investigates sites in Europe and around the globe, I use all these terms interchangeably.

Kevin Fox Gotham (2001) identifies three broad periods of urban redevelopment. The first spans the industrial revolution through the 1960s, a period that began with reform of the polluted, crowded industrial city and ended with urban renewal. Urban renewal, often predicated on the notion of “slum clearance,” was an aggressive government-led effort in most ‘Western’ industrialized nations to deal with declining inner cities (Klemek, 2011). The second period of urban redevelopment Gotham identifies is the late 1960s through 2000, a period of fiscal austerity and federal retrenchment emerging largely in response to the heavy-handed approach of urban renewal (Klemek, 2011). It marked a resurgence of community involvement and a shift to distributed power away from centralized rational-technical planning, such as Advocacy Planning, Black Power and other American and Western European movements to empower citizens and communities. The period of retrenchment can also be seen as the start of “new federalism” and the eventual devolution of government through programs such as Community Development Block Grants (Conlan, 1998). This is also a foundational period of the current neoliberal, market- and developer-driven of policy and planning environment.

Though there is a vast urban redevelopment literature, two key works from this second period are particularly germane to this research. The first is Logan and Molotch's (2007) groundbreaking book, *Urban Fortunes*. This book develops a political economy of urban redevelopment and expands the useful concept of the "growth machine" in the American context. The growth machine is a network of dominant, elite actors (individuals, institutions, organizations, etc.) who form coalitions to organize urban development in a city primarily to increase their own economic benefit. These actors tend to promote the capitalist interest in maximizing exchange values against what Logan and Molotch see as the desires of citizens, particularly those without significant capital, or to preserve use values. Despite the desires of most citizens to maximize use values, the dominant elite use material, political and rhetorical power to mobilize the government to focus on growing the city to produce increases in exchange values. Importantly, the growth machine plays a key role in legitimizing policies, using "their growth consensus to eliminate any alternative vision of the purpose of local government or the meaning of community" (Logan & Molotch, 2007, p. 51). This focus on growth is an important tension to consider in the context of shrinking cities, where growth may come at great cost, and/or limited public resources are especially scarce.

A second notable work from this period of urban redevelopment is Frieden and Sagalyn's (1991) *Downtown, Inc.: How America Rebuilds Cities*. Their work chronicles central city urban redevelopment projects across the United States in the 1980s. It covers the turn towards "entrepreneurial cities" that engage in public-private partnerships to produce development, a hallmark of the current neoliberal policy environment. The authors lay out cases, or models, of physical redevelopment interventions from various cities across the United States. The redevelopment models identified in the book, such as festival marketplaces, farmer/crafts

markets, and urban malls, have been mobilized and replicated in almost every major American city. Importantly, the authors note that as other cities implemented these model redevelopment projects, the proposals of developers using the same model in other, potentially disparate urban contexts gained credibility.

The last period Gotham identifies is “redevelopment in the twenty-first century.” In his discussion of this period, he presciently describes an era marked by “the multifaceted relationship between urban redevelopment, public policy, and extra local forces” (Gotham, 2001, p. 16). This period has seen intensified entrepreneurialism in urban redevelopment, neoliberalization of policy and perspective, a focus on arts-and-culture-led development and place marketing, and inter-city competition for the creative class (Addie, 2008; R. Florida, 2005; R. L. Florida, 2002; Grodach, 2012; J. R. Hackworth, 2006; MacLeod, 2002; Ruffin, 2010; Swyngedouw, Moulaert, & Rodriguez, 2002; Weber, 2002; Zimmerman, 2008). It includes a growing recognition of cities as tightly enmeshed in a global network of capital and idea flows. An underlying tension in the urban redevelopment literature is between these two perspectives: political economy and the flow of ideas. The political-economy approach sees capital and material concerns as constitutive parts of redevelopment actions (e.g, Fainstein, 1983; Harvey, 2001; Weber, 2002). However, an often powerful but somehow less appreciated perspective gives weight to the power of ideas (e.g., Fishman, 2007; Hall, 2002; Klemek, 2011). As exemplified in *Downtown, Inc.* and by projects such as Festival Marketplaces and the near-facsimile John Portman-designed projects to revitalize ailing central cities (the Peachtree Hotel in Atlanta, the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, and the Renaissance Center in Detroit), the power of ideas and the relational networks they are embedded in should not be discounted. Ideas do not spring whole cloth from designers, planners, developers or communities. They are tied up

in visions, expectations and understandings of desired future states and inevitably draw upon networks of knowledge. Both perspectives undoubtedly have value, and ‘actually existing’ urban redevelopment certainly involves both. But how the interventions are conceived, legitimized, and then contextualized (or not) requires more investigation.

It is clear that ideas, policies, and practices about urban redevelopment travel and influence decision-making. A glance at postindustrial and/or shrinking American cities reveals the legacy of many mobilized ideas, from downtown malls, festival marketplaces, waterfront redevelopments, stadiums, arenas, casinos and more. Rybczynski, in an Op-ed on the High Line, puts this dynamic in perspective:

American cities are always looking for quick fixes to revive their moribund downtowns.

Sadly, the dismal record of failed urban design strategies is long: downtown shopping malls, pedestrianized streets, underground passages, skyways, monorails, festival marketplaces, downtown stadiums – and that most elusive fix of all, iconic cultural buildings. It appears likely that we will soon be adding elevated parks to the list. (2011)

This not just an American concern, but also an increasingly global one. Rybczynski may be painting with an overly broad brush, as not every mobilized phenomenon that he mentions has been an outright failure in every site where it lands. Some can even be regarded as successes. But he makes a strong argument that the High Line is just one in a long line of mobile urbanism in urban redevelopment and reminds us of such projects’ uneven record of success.

What Can We Learn from the Mobilization of the High Line?

Fundamentally, this research seeks to uncover what can be learned from the mobilization of the High Line as a leading contemporary redevelopment practice, idea, and policy. What does it reveal about the mobilization of urban redevelopment practices, ideas and policies, and our

understanding of mobilities generally at this historical moment? Based on the mobilities and redevelopment literature, this broad inquiry calls for a host of additional probing questions: How was the High Line mobilized and how does it transfer? Who or what were the transfer agents? How does its unique history, context and high capital cost affect its applicability elsewhere? Why has it proven so powerful at shaping planning, urban design, and redevelopment practices around the world? What vision of the urban fabric is embedded in these projects? And many more.

I consider the above questions in the context of the existing literatures to understand continuities and deviations between this contemporary phenomenon and current understandings. But investigating the High Line is not only about the specifics of mobilities and urban redevelopment. Investigating the mobilized High Line also invites questions about contemporary urban planning, landscape, and urban design, as well as redevelopment. Specifically, the mobilization of the High Line and its adoption as a practice in a wide variety of contexts raises questions about the role of ideas and precedents in planning, design, and development. As Brooks states in an important introductory text on *Planning Theory for Practitioners*:

Regardless of the approach a planner opts to follow, planning inevitably entails choosing among alternatives: deciding what to do, or recommend, or incorporate into a particular plan, or even whom to involve and how. It is reasonable, then, to ask from what sources the planner acquires those alternatives, and what impact the social and political context has on the planner's ultimate choice among them. (2002, p. 139)

As we will see, this question must be extended beyond planners and other formal actors. But the call to probe where ideas come from and how social and political contexts impact choices in

urban development planning and design is deeply important. Likewise, it is a significant question overarching this research and dissertation.

Research Design

Drawing on the methodological recommendations in the mobile-urbanism literature, particularly those of Healey (2012, 2013) and McCann (2011b), this research uses an asymmetrical multi-case method centered on the High Line as the central point of comparison. The framework for this design builds upon three key elements of mobilized phenomena identified by Healey. The first step is to discover the “origin stories” of the idea, practice or policy that identifying “beyond their origin context, the rationalities or mentalities wrapped up in such stories and the forces which project them into movement” (Healey, 2013, p. 1520). To do this requires identifying the origins (by constructing full and accurate histories) and comparing them against the assembled and narrated origin stories, even legends. The second, is to trace “traveling histories” and determine “what is accumulated and what is shed as ideas flow along a circuit, and how these interact with and are co-produced by the travelling experience” (Healey, 2013, p. 1520). The last step is to consider the “translation experiences” by which “exogenous planning ideas and practices become ‘localized’ . . . adapted and inserted into struggles over discourse formation and institutionalization in new contexts” (Healey, 2013, p. 1520). As Healey notes, the relationships among all three of these issues are important to the study of mobile urbanism.

Research Methodology

Investigating mobilities offers a kaleidoscope of methodological possibilities (Cresswell, 2011a; McCann & Ward, 2011). Cresswell (2011a), in particular, praises the turn toward mobilities for its methodological openness and ability to link social science and the humanities,

primarily through rich ethnographic accounts. Specifically, methodological frameworks derived from mobile urbanism's epistemological stance, as embraced here, do not seek to mirror positivist research designs. Instead, they are understood primarily as alternatives to positivist approaches in the social sciences, embracing "a relational view emphasiz[ing] that knowledge is much broader than that developed through the procedures of scientific inquiry" (Healey, 2013, p. 1514).

Healey (2013) identifies three primary methodological frameworks for undertaking research in the mobilities: Actor Network Theory, Interpretive Policy Analysis and Mobilities/Circuit of Knowledge. Though Healey prefers a slightly more limited view of diffusion of planning over the broader concept of "mobilities," her insights are still helpful in delineating the methodology and lineage of research on mobilities. Actor Network Theory focuses on the "formation of 'scientific' knowledge" and how techniques and rationalities are formed and transferred (Healey, 2013, p. 1515). This methodology tends to treat policies and ideas as static and focus on the institutional dynamics that transfer them. Interpretive policy analysis focuses on the justification of policies and ideas and how they change specifically within policy networks. It focuses on "policy discourse analysis and the struggles over the rationalities and 'mentalities' of different political or policy communities" (Healey, 2013, p. 1517). Mobile urbanism (what Healey calls "circuits of knowledge") opens the investigation to wider social and material processes and gives "more attention to the dynamics of 'globalizing' forces and the political and economic struggles which create the 'global circuits of knowledge'" (Healey, 2013, p. 1519). This incorporates political economy and the flows of knowledge that construct and transfer ideas and policies. Of note is that Healey's concept of "circuits of

knowledge” is more post-structuralist in focus than that advocated by McCann and Ward’s mobile urbanism, which strongly incorporates political economy.

In Healey’s view, each of the three methodologies identified above can be used alone or in combination. McCann (2011a) asserts that, building on such investigatory frameworks, mobile urbanism can best be explored through empirical case studies. For example, a “mobile ethnography” has developed in the field that incorporates many sites and “moves along with, or besides, the object of research” (Cresswell, 2011b, p. 647). All seem to agree that “we would do well to learn from practices, from empirical engagement in specific situations” (Healey, 2013, p. 1522). Overall, the mobile-urbanism literature embraces the use of ethnographic case studies that are probing and utilize various tactics as needed to create rich, situated narratives of the processes and outcomes of mobile urbanism.

Drawing on the insights of Healey and McCann, this research uses a multi-case methodology that investigates a wide variety of discursive and material processes around the production, mobilization, and landing of the High Line as an idea, policy, and practice. Following the call in the mobile-urbanism literature for deeply contextualized accounts, I make no attempt to “systematize qualities of context” for each case and instead focus on “rich narratives” in the situated exploration of each case (Healey, 2012, p. 196). The idea is to identify processes and lessons from the investigation of each case that develop a better understanding of the High Line’s mobilization, spread and landing.

As McCann (2011b) suggests, the cases are linked by a probing and flexible “global ethnography” approach. Global ethnography (Burawoy, 2000; Gille & Riain, 2002) is based on the extended case method elucidated by Burawoy (1998). The “extended case method involves ethnographic engagement with participants and processes, careful attention to the external forces

and connections shaping specific sites, and, as a result of this work the extension of theory” (McCann, 2011b). Global ethnography, in a kind of turn toward mobilities, broadens the scope of the extended case method to incorporate concepts of movement and enhanced connections of the local to the global, or “*transnational* connections – flows of people, information, and ideas” (Burawoy, 2000, p. 34). It provides a framework to explore in depth local processes, understandings and structures that connect to global processes, understandings, and structures.

By incorporating Healey’s methodological perspective into this framework, as outlined above, this research approach probes cases in ways that explore the interaction between the discursive/post-structuralist and materialist/structuralist dynamics of the mobilized High Line. I deployed a number of tactics to investigate the cases. First, I performed a historical analysis of the sites and their contexts, conducting considerable archival research on a variety of sources from several time periods. Second, I conducted site visits and analyses, visiting 14 individual projects. The third tactic was discourse analysis, which, as described by McCann, is an

analysis of a wide range of documents including government documents, newspapers, professional publications, Web pages, podcasts, videos, and blogs; interviews with key transfer agents involved in mobilizing policies; and ethnographic observation of various settings where transfer occurs or is facilitated, including public meetings, conferences, site visits, seminars, and lectures. (2011b)

I analyzed each of these forms of discourse, with an addition focus on the wider internet-enabled public discourse in media and social media. Quantifying some of the discourse analysis and mapping it produced specific insights into the framing and spread of the mobilized High Line.

The fourth tactic, in the political-economy frame, was policy analysis (Healey, 2013). I analyzed policies, project finance and, particularly, political dimensions. Lastly, formal and

informal interviews produced ‘insider’ evidence as well as supplemented the discourse analysis. The research includes 32 formal interviews, as well as some informal (and anonymous) interview data. The overall aim is to combine discourse analysis with ethnographic approaches to produce “insider” evidence (Hammersley, 2005) about processes and understandings in the specific case of mobile urbanism in urban redevelopment. These five deliberately wide-ranging methodological steps provide the breadth needed to probe the interlocking processes of mobile urbanism that produced the High Line and made it a mobilized practice.

Overview of the Chapters

Embracing an approach of global ethnography applied to a worldwide mobilized phenomenon, this research often employs thick description. I probe histories and discourses in detail to understand their role in the mobilization of the High Line. For reasons described above, such an approach is necessary. The making of ideas, practices, policies, models, etc. that can travel is a process of flattening and narrating. To gain perspective on these processes requires in-depth probing that does not produce sleek narratives like those it seeks to investigate.

Chapter Two begins to lay out a detailed history of the High Line. It describes the production of the original structure and puts the High Line in perspective, highlighting the role of infrastructure as a type of commodity and marker of early transatlantic competition for the mantle of progress. Building on this notion of commodity and symbol, the chapter describes a key shift in the value of the High Line during New York’s post-industrial period. This detailed history also provides a point of comparison to document what did and did not make it into the origin stories and other discourse about the redevelopment of the High Line.

Chapter Three describes the process by which the High Line, understood as an obsolete piece of infrastructure and an impediment to neighborhood functioning and revitalization, was

transformed into a potential asset and driver of both. Its particular physical and legal circumstances, mixed with the timing of economic cycles, made it a surprisingly obdurate object in one of the most competitive real estate environments in the world. Postmodern ideas of an urban form composed of artifacts and historical meaning, new imaginaries and key shifts in political power granted what once appeared to be a doomed, dysfunctional piece of obsolete rail infrastructure a new lease on life.

Chapter Four describes in detail the redevelopment of the High Line. Examining its wild success both as a project and as a media sensation, this section seeks to expand knowledge of the processes at work in redeveloping the High Line. It includes the design, political, neighborhood, and real estate development contexts. In addition, it describes some of the criticism and concerns about the project which are often minimized in popular discourse. This is an attempt, as much as possible, to describe the ‘real’ High Line, something more complete and more complicated than the lauded success described in most discourse.

Chapter Five investigates how the High Line was transformed from a real place into something that travels. It focuses on a wide variety of discourse on the High Line, in particular, internet-enabled media discourse that reaches all corners of the globe. Considering the details of how the High Line was formed into something that can travel, it argues that what most widely travels should be considered a “traveling urban imaginary” – what is mobilized is much more than a policy or an idea (and it exceeds the bounds of formal networks of professionals and organizations). Likewise, the details of this traveling urban imaginary should be interrogated to understand what aspects of urbanism it embraces, and why it has proven so mobile and motivating, as well as popular locally.

Chapter Six maps and analyzes a High Line Family Tree. Using a snowball process to capture a wide range of projects associated with the High Line, it assembles sets of “ancestors” and “descendants” of the High Line. Analyzing them by a typological framework, it seeks to create a richer understanding of what is broadly understood as *a* High Line in other contexts and sort them into “waves.” Plotting the family tree and dividing by waves gives insights into the reach and progression of the High Line as a mobilized global phenomenon.

Chapter Seven delves more deeply into the concept of ancestors. It takes a deeper look at an idea history around the High Line and how it influences both origin stories and their use as tools to promote the High Line as an intervention in other contexts. It then investigates the power of ancestors – how and why descendants develop post-hoc associations with the High Line. A particularly significant antecedent, the Promenade Plantée, is investigated in detail. A typologically similar project in a world-famous city built over ten years before the High Line, it prompts questions about the implications of association, the quality and raw power of the antecedent, and common teleological conceptions of mobilized ideas and practices as innovations.

Chapter Eight then delves more deeply into the descendants of the High Line. It investigates the relationship between the High Line and projects that have been bolstered or inspired (and then bolstered) by the High Line. The High Line phenomenon becomes an important tool not just of inspiration, but of justifying projects that claim association. Association becomes a marker of project viability, possibility and attention. I investigate three cases of descendants in detail, arguing that the process, hardly even and straightforward as some might argue, should be recognized as socially constructed and less predicated on the inherent value of the High Line as a solution to urban revitalization.

Chapter Nine concludes the research by emphasizing the importance of recognizing what can be learned from seeing the High Line as a major mobilized urban redevelopment phenomenon and the findings of the research. It argues for expanding investigations of mobilities beyond formal networks and actors, and foregrounding the role of the urban imaginary in motivating urban planning, design and development practices around the globe. Furthermore, it argues that planning and design professionals should recognize, wrest control of, and apply these processes in their work.

The research reveals the continuities and discontinuities of contemporary mobilized urban redevelopment. It situates the lauded High Line in a history of mobilized ideas and symbols. As it is a piece of physical, fixed infrastructure, it highlights the specifics of value associated with the object based not on use value, but on a form of social and symbolic value. It reveals processes of how contemporary urban redevelopment ideas and practices are formed into something that can travel, specifically through the employment of urban imaginaries and origin stories that support dominant political projects or community aspirations. It adds to and calls for a shifting focus in the mobilities literature, at least in relation to urban development, design and planning.

Although I draw on theoretical literatures, my findings are not simply academic. They make a case for an awareness of how mobilized ideas, policies, and practices impact praxis in the production of the urban environment. Mobilized phenomena become part of the accepted repertoire of formal and informal actors who produce the urban environment. They can inform and illuminate, as well as obscure and undermine scrutiny, analysis, and debate. Adoption of High Line-like projects, like most mobilized ideas, practices and policies, are not necessarily bad

but will always have uneven outcomes. Mobilized phenomenon always mutate when they land, and the urban context of any city is too complex to say with certainty under what conditions they will work. Nonetheless, this research can help planners, designers, and policymakers, among others, better understand and reflect on mobile policies, practices, and ideas and be wary of the infectious nature of hot ideas and trends. Or, as Patsy Healey advocates, “[i]t should help to situate such ideas and experiences in specific contexts, and to understand the complex dynamics of competing sources of ‘systemic power’ as these co-evolve with the capacity for localized learning and experimentation” (2013, p. 1523).

Mobilized policies may offer inspiration that can lead to good outcomes due to learning and new, hybrid practices. But they also conceal a web of practices and power whereby mobile policies and ideas carry a self-reinforcing and formidable rationality of “success.” Likewise, the power of these traveling ideas and policies is magnified by dynamics of relational and material disadvantage between cities in the global hierarchy. By highlighting these dynamics, this research encourages planners, policymakers and other actors to think more reflectively and effectively about the adoption of mobile ideas and practices and also to focus on asserting “alternative ways of imagining their cities, their differences and their possible futures” (Robinson, 2002, p. 545).

Chapter II **A Brief History of the High Line Prior to 1999: From Asset to Liability to New Imaginings**

As a piece of infrastructure, the High Line, was primarily a solution to a problem that eventually captured the attention of enough, and the right, people. In the case of Manhattan's West Side, it was a solution to the nearly crippling congestion of goods movement and dangerous conflicts between freight trains and both pedestrians and vehicles. A modern feat of engineering, it elevated trains above the street and eliminated these problems. But while predicated for a very specific need and use, the High Line also played an important role as a symbol of progress in New York's renowned image as a center of industrial era modernity. It was not only a technological solution that more safely and swiftly moved commodities; it was also a significant symbol of progress, and a sort of commodity itself.

This section highlights the interesting, if relatively brief, history of the High Line as a major piece of urban industrial infrastructure. While a detailed history of the High Line could be a study in itself, this section provides a more streamlined but still relatively fine-grained history for three purposes. First, it offers an important background from which to later compare the history that has – and has not – been included in its contemporary narrative. Celebrated as a bridge to New York's past and its future, the High Line's history is key to understating it as a contemporary phenomenon. This provides a basis to examine what is included, what is left out, and how the current narrative builds a postmodern tale of industrial heritage and preservation. Second, it highlights the High Line's symbolic and valuable role in representing modernity and

progress. Though a latecomer to the drama that was the creation of better industrial infrastructure, it was still an important symbol for Manhattan and New York. Third, it shows how, by blending symbol and use, the High Line was a type of mobilized commodity even before its wide mobilization into an urban revitalization phenomenon.

Beginnings: Solution, Symbol, Commodity

The history of the High Line begins with the Hudson River as a central site for goods movement in New York City. New York is a harbor city, where international and domestic trade was its original economic lifeblood. With the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, the importance of the city's ports, particularly along the Hudson River, increased substantially (La Farge, 2012, p. 8). Already a crucial harbor along the Hudson River, the West Side area, where the High Line runs today, developed into a major multimodal transportation node upon the construction of the Hudson River Railroad along the shoreline in the 1840s (Gray, 1988).

As the freight and industrial activities of the area grew, the development of the St. John's Freight Depot in 1866 (not to be confused with St. John's Terminal, which came later), built on the site of St. John's Park by rail baron Cornelius Vanderbilt, marked a turning point for the neighborhood just east of the river (Condit, 1980, p. 39). It established the area as a "bustling center of shipping and loft and factory development" (Gray, 1988). St. John's Park was sold to Vanderbilt by the Episcopal Trinity Church, which, in addition to building a park, had developed housing on some of adjacent parcels to develop the upscale St. John's Park neighborhood. The church had provided keys to this gated park to nearby residents of the mansions that once held the city's "first families" ("St. John's Park," 1867), making it somewhat similar to the private Gramercy Park still in existence today.

An article in the *New York Times* about the expansion of the railroad summed up the feeling of many progress-oriented New Yorkers of the time: “[W]hile we see the remorseless hand of Improvement sweeping down historical monuments, we find consolation in the fact that this particular improvement will be for the benefit of the City and especially of the locality most nearly affected” (“St. John’s Park,” 1867). The destruction of the park and, inevitably, the stately neighborhood that was built around it was, to most, a desirable step in the march toward progress and a part of what Max Page (1999) has called “the creative destruction of Manhattan.” The rail terminal did lead to the replacement of much of the genteel housing into an industrial center of warehouses, with some tenements squeezed in between. St. John’s Parish chapel, which sat facing the park and was an important piece of early New York architecture, was later demolished for street widening. Its destruction was one of Manhattan’s first major historic preservation battles (Page, 1999, pp. 116–120).

As the city rapidly grew around the industrial and warehousing activities of the West Side, the area’s prime river location and the development of rail infrastructure allowed it to remain a centrally located market district, primarily for the importation and distribution of foods and fuel for the city. As goods distribution patterns and modes changed and the city expanded, the area shifted to become specialized in meat packing and dairy (La Farge, 2012, p. 8). The patent of a refrigerated railroad car in 1867 drove the rapid growth of the area as a center of food processing and distribution (Howe, 2007, p. 8:7).

In 1869, Hudson River Railroad was merged with New York Central Railroad, kicking off a major expansion of rail facilities on the West Side and beyond (Condit, 1980, p. 84). The West Side rail line became what proponents called the “Life Line of New York” because, as the then only continuous freight rail extension on the island of Manhattan, the city “depends on the

transportation afforded by this line for its food and milk, and for merchandise, express and varied commodities” (New York Central Railroad Company, 1934). The area of “traffic-congested streets and great warehouses and piers” was sometimes called “the farm” and by the 1920s was “said to handle enough food each day to feed 10 million people” (Townsend, 1925). To emphasize its importance and impressive economic reach, a *New York Times* writer claimed that from the area “are mailed daily checks that supply revenue to farmers in every state in the Union, unless there be a State that does not raise a pound of exportable human food” (Townsend, 1925).

This bustling area was congested with trains running at grade to serve warehouses, snarling traffic. Despite operating at minimal speeds, regular fatalities resulted from collisions of trains with pedestrians and vehicles. Tenth Avenue, where the main trunk of the rail line to serve the area ran (along with other at grade portions on 11th and 12th Avenues), became infamous as “Death Avenue” for its numerous pedestrian and vehicle occupant fatalities. In the 1850s, the city passed an ordinance requiring flagmen on horseback to ride ahead of trains, holding lanterns or red flags to give warning (La Farge, 2012, p. 9). This “antique law” improved the situation for drivers and pedestrians, yet resulted in worse overall traffic and congestion (Condit, 1981, p. 140), slowing the trains to a crawling six miles an hour (“MAYOR DEDICATES WEST SIDE PROJECT,” 1934, p. 10). Despite praise for their service by some nearby residents (Subramanian, 2006) these riders, now remembered as the iconic “Westside Cowboys,” failed to significantly alleviate the problem of collisions and injuries. Advocates for the removal of the West Side Line on city streets claimed that by 1908 there had been 324 deaths from trains colliding with other vehicles and pedestrians (“New York Section,” 1908, p. 42). By comparison, there were no pedestrian deaths with railroads in New York City (not including the subway) between 2007 and 2016 (Federal Railroad Administration Office of Safety Analysis, 2017).

There was ever-mounting pressure from local resident organizations to find solutions to the congestion and danger posed by indispensable railroad infrastructure in the area. But it was also part and parcel of the larger issues facing the ever-growing and congested city. In *New Metropolis*, an ambitious history of New York City from 1600-1900, the “congested districts of Manhattan Island” were described as the city’s “most objectionable feature,” and great faith was put in the “building of bridges and the digging of tunnels, and by the use of whatever inventions there may be in the way of rapid transit” to relieve the problem (Zeisloft, 1899, p. iii). The need to accommodate the vital goods movement on the West Side made congestion solutions imperative, though, despite the rapid creative destruction Manhattan is famed for, achieving a solution was a remarkably plodding process.

The original High Line was the eventual solution to the problem of congestion and fatalities on the West Side – and it took over 40 years to come to fruition. While the exact genesis of the idea for the original High Line rail viaduct is not clear, it was in part influenced by transatlantic competition and the trade of ideas during the progressive era (Rodgers, 1998). In the summer of 1890, William Steinway, of piano manufacturing fame, vacationed in Europe accompanied by U.S. Representative John H. Starin and Chauncey M. Depew, President of the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad (later the New York Central Railroad). On this trip, Mr. Steinway “made a special study of the rapid-transit question, having as an occasional object lesson the Berlin Viaduct Railroad” and thinks it the “nearest approach to an ideal system which mechanical and inventive genius has as yet evolved” (“LESSONS IN RAPID TRANSIT,” 1890, p. 9). The viaduct referred to is the Stadtbahn, an elevated rail artery built in 1882 that carries trains through the center of Berlin to this day. The observations made by Mr. Steinway on his trip were published in the *New York Times* as important lessons on rapid transit and the

successful operation of a large rail viaduct in Berlin, and he became an advocate for the building of viaducts and tunnels for New York's rapid transit. Specifically, Mr. Steinway "received a suggestion" from railroad President Mr. Depew of a "strongly-built four-track elevated railroad" as a way to deal with the congestion of West Side goods movement ("LESSONS IN RAPID TRANSIT," 1890, p. 9). Although it is not certain that Mr. Depew's idea did not precede his trip to Berlin, it is clear that Berlin was a model and influence in exchange of policies and ideas – one that undergirds the notion of the original High Line.

The reports of success in Berlin, and the Stadtbahn in particular, gave additional credence to viaducts as a solution to congestion in New York and its West Side. However, while the Stadtbahn was certainly technologically impressive at the time, elevated railroads were hardly a new phenomenon at the time of Mr. Steinway's trip; they dated back to at least to the 1830s in London. And they were hardly new to New York, which saw its first elevated railways in 1868. In fact, Manhattan's elevated railways were the examples of progress as viewed by other American cities. In 1880, boosters in Boston, for example, praised Manhattan's elevated railroads as key elements of New York's success and part of "everything that can make a place attractive" to life and commerce (Merrill, 1880, p. 27). More than just technical solutions, elevated railroads in the industrial age were important symbol of progress and modernity. As Scobey argues, elevated railroads were "props in a world historical drama" played out on a world stage, primarily the North Atlantic basin. The impressive, sophisticated elevated railway in Berlin reported on by Mr. Steinway played to the "metaphor of American behindness" (Rodgers, 1998, p. 71) and animated rivalries over progress among industrial nations.

That Berlin's Stadtbahn was an inspiration, or at least a motivator, for the High Line in the 1890s is notable. Later, it would prove a particularly iconic example of the trade in symbols

of rail infrastructure by being featured in the opening of the film *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (Ruttman, Freund, (Firm), & (Firm), 1999). The film begins by following a train hurtling toward Berlin, with simple grade crossing gates closing as it passes through the countryside. As the city center comes nearer, the train begins to glide above buildings, streets, and traffic along ever more sophisticated elevated railway infrastructure, smoothly pulling into Anhalter Bahnhof unimpeded. For many, the entry to a “great city” in this era was in part predicated upon experiencing this tectonic shift in the scale and sophistication of rail infrastructure. It was, to many, a hallmark of a great city of the era.

Despite Berlin’s example, another 15 years passed between Mr. Depew’s suggestion to Mr. Steinway and any major action on the congestion of the West Side market area. Although the need was clear, the idea was planted, and a credible example and aspiration identified, the politics and power systems still had to run their course. The first major step towards removing railroads from the streets of the West Side started in 1905 with consideration of a bill by the New York State legislature to require the railroad to build a tunnel. It was later turned into a more obtuse bill that was passed in 1906, requiring railroads to be removed from grade but providing no means or enforcement for achieving this aim (Condit, 1981, p. 141). Despite enthusiasm for improvements and growing concerns over congestion and safety, agreeing on a plan for removing the New York Central’s West Side trains from the streets became a drawn-out affair. Pressure mounted in early 1908, when 500 school children marched to protest the death of a seven-year-old boy who was climbing over a stalled train on Eleventh Avenue (north of the High Line in what is now Hell’s Kitchen) and “fell beneath the wheels and was ground to death” (“CHILDREN PARADE AGAINST DEATH AVE,” 1908, p. 9). Opponents of the rail line claimed that the death toll reached 100 people per year due to the line (Varga, 2013, p. 218). The

protest lead to the formation of the League to End Death Avenue (David, Hock, Design Trust for Public Space, & Friends of the High Line, 2002, p. 45), which added more public pressure to resolve the West Side rail issue.

Following the events in 1908, the engineer of Grand Central Terminal, William J. Wigus, proposed a freight and passenger tunnel solution, and in 1910, Commissioner of City Docks Calvin Tompkins proposed a municipally owned elevated rail viaduct that would extend all the way from Seventy Second Street (the south end of Riverside Park) to St. John's Terminal (Condit, 1981, p. 141). City Engineer Ernest C. Moore produced a report for the Board of Estimate as well, advising that the rock layer on the West Side made a tunnel infeasible and recommended a four track elevated railway (Varga, 2013, p. 219). Various publicly formed committees were created to weigh these and other solutions (“WEST SIDE TERMINAL RECEIVES A SETBACK,” 1911).

Debate about potential solutions raged on as pressure built for a solution. In 1916 New York Central Railroad submitted detailed plans and cost estimates for modernization of the West Side railroad with the City's Board of Estimate. The plans included an elevated portion south of the existing rail yards that, while different from the final High Line, is a very close precursor (“WEST SIDE TRACKS PLANS IS COMPLETE,” 1916). The plans called for the complete elimination of all at-grade rail on the West Side, and claimed the elevated portion would “permit full utilization of all blocks through which it passes for factories and warehouses, and is expected to revitalize a large section of Manhattan which has long been retarded” (“FILE FULL PLANS FOR THE WEST SIDE,” 1916, p. 4) These plans were displayed at City Hall and Grand Central Station, which is notable in that it was also the display site for winners of a conceptual design competition for the reuse of the High Line almost a century later.

While the warehousing and distribution areas of the West Side were an important focus, much of the most contested public debate over how to proceed ended up focusing on the impact of related rail improvements to Riverside Park, north of the elevated High Line portion (Condit, 1981, p. 142). Prominent citizens worried that plans for the railroad's expansion through the park would leave it "hopelessly marred" ("RIVERSIDE PLANS MISSTATED, THEY SAY," 1916, p. 19) and, with the railroad unwavering in its preferred alternative, the deadlock stretched into World War I: "The burdens imposed by the war, control of the railroads by the federal government, their financial difficulties in the immediate postwar years, the depression and the labor troubles that accompanied it – these delayed the implementation of the West Side program so many years that few must have believed it would ever be realized" (Condit, 1981, p. 143).

By the 1920s, congestion in New York had reached the level that the Police Commissioner told the *New York Times*, "We are at the end of our rope under present conditions. We have cut down sidewalks, made one-way streets and formulated drastic street regulations, but the situation is getting intolerably worse. Something must be done at once" ("SAYS TRAFFIC HERE IS BEYOND CONTROL," 1922, p. 1). While calling for more use of viaducts and tunnels throughout the city and warning that the local businesses may grind to a halt without them, the Police Commissioner also zeroed in on the West Side by specially calling the congestion of goods movement there "intolerable" and suggesting a "viaduct eighty feet wide be constructed from the Battery to Fifty-ninth Street funded by a bond issue ("SAYS TRAFFIC HERE IS BEYOND CONTROL," 1922, p. 1). The Commissioner, 14 years before the establishment of the New York City Planning Commission, appealed to international precedent for more public management of the urban environment: "Why not have a board empowered to take up city planning . . .? Paris has such a board, and the results of its work justify its existence"

(“SAYS TRAFFIC HERE IS BEYOND CONTROL,” 1922, p. 1). Representative of a city so proud to be a symbol of modernity and progress as New York, the Police Commissioner’s appeal fits with other progressive era concerns about lagging behind in “a race down the ways of progress” (Rodgers, 1998, p. 77).

Alfred H. Smith, then president of the New York Central Railroad, complained that the city, its businesses, and its railroads, lost hundreds of thousands of dollars a day due to the inefficiencies of its goods movement system (Condit, 1981, p. 144). The eventual rebounding of the economy after World War I and the ever-mounting frustrations led to renewed action in 1923 by the Public Transit Commission and the Transit Commission of New York, which had been given authority to manage public approvals for the project (Condit, 1981, p. 146). Picking up on their prewar plans and confident that the project was inevitable, the New York Central Railroad began preliminary work on West Side rail improvements in 1925 without formal agreement with the City of New York (“TRAINS OFF STREET ON WEST SIDE SOON,” 1937, p. 3).

In 1926, the State of New York authorized up to \$300 million in bonds for the rail improvements and other projects to alleviate congestion on the West Side. The Commission’s actions and the availability of funding mechanisms paved the way for preliminary planning and construction, and it also set in motion prolonged negotiations between the City of New York and the still politically and economically powerful New York Central Railroad. In 1927, the City of New York found that the New York Central Railroad had illegally built railways on city-owned property along the Hudson River, complicating negotiations for easements and land swaps for a new rail yard (now Hudson Yards) sought by the Railroad (“OUSTING OF RAILROAD FROM CITY PARK SITE IS ADVISED BY M’KEE,” 1927). The City and the New York Central Railroad, after much negotiation and horse trading, came to agreement on the project in 1929.

The key was an “exchange for easements and inland sites for large railyards” between the City and the Railroad (Gray, 1991, p. A.6).

After 40 years of proposals for improving the rail line on the West Side, critics of the plans were mostly satisfied with the project, particularly its treatment of Riverside Park. However, some still grumbled loudly over the aesthetics of elevated railroads, such as a desire for arches on the High Line instead of square corners (“WEST SIDE PROJECT NOW READY FOR VOTE,” 1929). Again, looking forward to the high-design redevelopment of the High Line 80 years later, it is ironic that aesthetics, seen as a frivolity, was among the last lingering issues. Then Mayor Walker, who had a long standing feud with the Municipal Art Commission, “scoffed” at and roundly rejected the suggestion that the Commission should bother to review the project for aesthetic concerns (“WEST SIDE PROJECT NOW READY FOR VOTE,” 1929). Tossing aside the aesthetic concerns, He signed the agreement with the New York Central Railroad on July 5th for the West Side rail line (the High Line and the underground Riverside Park portion to the north). In the end, the New York Central Railroad was powerful enough to get the swaps and easements it wanted, foreshadowing a controversial assignment of air rights to politically powerful real estate speculators on land under the easements of the High Line during its redevelopment 80 years later.

The New York Central Railroad’s efforts were part of what became known as the West Side Improvement Project, a name coined for the entire suite of improvement sought for the West Side in 1925 by the then Manhattan Borough President (David et al., 2002, p. 46). In the end, the West Side Improvement Project included 13 miles of rail improvements along the West Side of Manhattan, a new and expanded St. John’s Freight Terminal, the creation of the elevated

West Side Highway (officially the Miller Highway), the development of Henry Hudson Parkway, and the expansion of Riverside Park (Robbins, 1934).

The railway portion of the project was divided into two parts. The first was the West Side Viaduct, now called the High Line, that primarily replaced the at-grade railway running down 10th Avenue (“Death Avenue”) to a new St. John’s Terminal. The second portion was a tunnel and below-grade section that ran from the rail yards (Hudson Yards today), north through Riverside Park. In total, the 13 miles of rail improvements removed 105 hazardous at-grade crossings on key freight lines serving the warehouses of west Manhattan. Although less visible, the Riverside portion was still impressive. Opening after the High Line, it required the excavation of over 600,000 cubic yards soil and 200 buildings (“TRAINS OFF STREET ON WEST SIDE SOON,” 1937, p. 3). It was constructed in a kind of public-private partnership, in which the New York Central Railroad managed the engineering and construction but relied heavily on public financing mechanisms, primarily bonds. The final cost of the rail portion of the West Side Improvement Project’s rail improvements was over \$175 million at the time (David et al., 2002, p. 11), or approximately \$2.5 billion in 2016 dollars. The High Line portion is estimated to have cost \$85 million (David et al., 2002, p. 48), or approximately \$1.5 billion in today’s dollars.

The first “revenue” freight train of the High Line ran on the railroad’s the first completed northern section from Hudson Yards to 20th Street of the on August 1st, 1933 (“WEST SIDE VIADUCT OPENED TO FREIGHT,” 1933), and the occasion was toasted with beer from Milwaukee carried by the cars (“Railroad Will Open New Viaduct Today,” 1933, p. 25). The complete High Line, from Hudson Yards to St. John’s Terminal, was dedicated on June 28th, 1934 and, taking back the mantel of progress, it was hailed as “the beginning of the death of

Death Avenue” and “one of the greatest public improvements in the history of New York” (“MAYOR DEDICATES WEST SIDE PROJECT,” 1934, p. 1). An article in the *New York Times* in 1934 describes the appeal of the High Line’s first built sections:

The elevated highway has become familiar enough nowadays to be accepted without wonder. The roving New Yorker gets a bigger thrill out of the New York Central’s elevated freight road [the High Line] . . . [T]he railroad is set free from the city street map and takes directions of its own.

High in the air, it cuts through city blocks. It passes into big buildings in its path and emerges on the other side to continue on its way, leaping any cross streets it meets. Along its new aerial course large new buildings have already been erected, and others are under construction for packing companies and similar concerns. The road enters them at the second story and shunt its cars to upstairs sidings within their walls. (Robbins, 1934, p. 155)

When fully opened to freight traffic, the High Line stretched over twice as far as what remains today, from Hudson Yards to St. John’s Terminal on Spring Street at its southern end. Running mid-block instead of above the street, it required the removal of 640 buildings and the negotiation of a similar numbers of easements (“LAND 95% BOUGHT FOR WEST SIDE PLAN,” 1931; New York Central Railroad Company, 1934).

An impressive structure standing 30 feet above the street, with a minimum clearance of 14 feet, the High Line employed direct above grade connections to service warehouses and passed through other buildings along the way, both of which were particular points of engineering pride. Some of the buildings not removed or built around the High Line after construction had sections removed so trains could pass through. For example, a large hole was

cut in the Bell Laboratories building, “where it was necessary to support the Viaduct on caissons independent of the building in order to eliminate vibration, which might affect the precision instruments” (New York Central Railroad Company, 1934). This complex engineering feat was designed not by an engineering firm but New York Central Railroad staff engineer J.W. Phau, who also designed the West Side Highway (Gray, 1991, p. A.6). The structure was not just an engineering feat; it included art deco elements designed by Sloan & Robertson (a firm still known today for creating some of Manhattan’s Art Deco masterpieces, such as the Chanin Building), many of which survive today in what one writer called “battleship modern” (Gray, 1991, p. A.6). The St. John’s terminal was itself a massive undertaking: “The three-block long St. John’s terminal was so large that 127 trucks could be loaded or unloaded simultaneously inside the building. The freight was moved from the street to the 150 freight cars on the second floor by 18 freight elevators” (Dalton, 1966, p. 208). Confident in the continued rapid growth of goods movement and storage in the area, the terminal was designed to accommodate an additional of nine stories (Dalton, 1966, p. 208).

The High Line was an ambitious project both in its engineering and its scope. On the whole, the West Side Improvement Project, with the High Line as a key and visible part, was expected to “fill the West Side of Manhattan through most of its length with bustle for several years to come and will leave the flank of the island transformed for new usefulness” (Robbins, 1934). While the West Side Improvement Project was primarily aimed at removing at-grade railroad crossings, reducing congestion, and improving access to the river parks, it was also a real estate development tool, “followed by an extensive development of real estate on the west side” (“NEW YORK TO BUILD ELEVATED HIGHWAY,” 1926, p. 211). It may have been in its day as much of a success as today’s High Line. Again, this foreshadows the High Line

conversation into a new form of public park infrastructure that also has the accompanying aim of revitalizing the West Side of Manhattan.

The High Line as Solution and Commodity

While the High Line was a technical solution to the very real problems of congestion and fatalities, it also acted as a symbol in the “world drama” that around the trappings of industrial modernity. The High Line did not only move commodities; it *was* a commodity. Certainly, large, custom built, and (generally speaking) immovable infrastructure, like elevated rail viaducts, do not fit the commonly held notion of what a commodity is. But seeing it as such not only shines a new light on the role of how infrastructure constitutes part of urban experience and how it can travel to other locales, it also parallels important economic social-spatial shifts during industrialization.

At their most straightforward, commodities are easily moved and interchangeable goods. Interestingly, rail infrastructure played a central role in the modern formation of commodities. Drawing on Karl Marx’s argument in *Grundrisse* that transforming something into a commodity requires putting distance between it and its place of production, Schivelbusch emphasizes how the speed and efficiency of rail transportation was a prerequisite for modern commodities: “Only when modern transportation created a definite spatial distance between the place of production and the place of consumption did the goods become uprooted commodities” (1986, p. 40). Over time and by building upon other works by Marx and critical geographers, the definition of commodities has expanded far beyond simply mobile and replaceable goods. Sharon Zukin (1991, 1995), in particular, has extended this notion to urban space and artifacts that are transformed into cultural commodities with new economic and symbolic value.

Kaika and Swyngendouw (2000) have focused this more expansive line to thinking on commodities to infrastructure specifically. They make a strong argument for how modern urban infrastructure from early on, at its most visible, became fetishized as a type of commodity: “When the urban became constructed as agglomerated use values that turned the city into a theater of accumulation and economic growth, urban networks became the iconic embodiments of and shrines to a technologically scripted image and practice of progress” (Kaika & Swyngedouw, 2000; Kipfer, 2015). Rail infrastructure was a key and visible part of these urban networks. Although purpose built and difficult to move, urban rail and particularly large viaducts, bridges, and other technologically sophisticated solutions were in fact very much a type of commodity. With some aesthetic embellishments aside, they were part of a fairly standardized kit of options. A rail viaduct may look and be engineered differently in various contexts, but it does, and symbolizes, the same fundamental thing in each case. That infrastructure is a commodity that takes on important symbolic value unspecific to its context is what Kaika and Swyngendouw identify as a process of fetishization; it is “severed from its historical and geographical (hence social) process of production; a process that is, of course, full of ambiguities and contradictions” (2000, p. 121).

The High Line’s historical arc presents a useful example of this process. Looking forward, it foretells key elements in the investigation of this dynamic. With the rise of interstate trucking, deindustrialization, and purposeful deconcentrating of urban activities the High Line’s economic and symbolic value shifts from positive to negative. The contemporary rebuilding of the value of this infrastructure is overwhelming symbolic and this symbolic value has been transferred to similar infrastructure globally. To extend the analysis to the conversation into a commodity with almost exclusively symbolic value Arjun Appadurai’s (1986) concept of a

“social life of things” is particularly helpful. Coming from an ethnographic approach and building upon work by Georg Simmel, Appadurai focuses on “exploring the conditions under which economic objects circulate in different *regimes of value* in space and time” (1986, p. 4). There is use value, but there are also regimes of value that can be applied to things even if they have dubious exchange value. This concept is offered here to illustrate the next phases of the High Line’s existence: a dramatic set of conversations not just in use value but also symbolic value. This concept will be returned to when discussing how the High Line became a mobilized phenomenon.

From Asset to Liability to Asset: Obsolescence, Obduracy, and New Imaginings

Despite being a major improvement to the safety and traffic flow for the area, the High Line had a relatively short useful life as the shift to interstate trucking in the 1950s and later significantly reduced its traffic (the Westside Highway was in use for longer, but was completely demolished in 1973). In the 1950s, some major tenants in the area moved to more spacious and newer accommodations, such as Nabisco moving to New Jersey, as the City of New York worked to “decentralizes its wholesale food markets” (Howe, 2007, p. 6). In the 1960s, barely 30 years after its completion, the High Line was already being partially decommissioned by the Penn Central Railroad (which had absorbed the New York Central Railroad). The southern anchor of the High Line, the St. John’s Freight Depot, was closed (it has since been converted into an apartment building) and, moving northward, sections of the High Line up to Gansevoort Street were slowly removed.

In the 1960s, a section below Washington Street was removed to create the West Village Apartments (Gottlieb, 1984, p. B.1). The section north of Gansevoort Street to Hudson Yards stayed in use longer, though minimally: “By 1978, traffic on the [remaining] line was down to

two carloads a week. But construction of the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, which crossed the route, required a one-year interruption in service in 1980 and two major freight customers relocated to New Jersey. Although the connection was restored in 1981, service did not resume” (Gray, 1988). It is often said that the final train ran along the northern section of the High Line carrying frozen thanksgiving turkeys in 1980 (La Farge, 2012, p. 10), though the accuracy of this story is unconfirmed. After a long and drawn-out bankruptcy of the Penn Central Railroad, the High Line was absorbed by Conrail in 1984 (Gray, 1988), an entity formed by the Federal Government in 1973 to manage six bankrupt railroads (Consolidation Rail Corporation, n.d.). Some describe the year of Conrail’s takeover as 1980 (Gopnik, 2001, p. 46) and the discrepancy is minor disagreements about the full transfer of the assets of bankrupt railroads already in control of Conrail the end of the 1970s. Seeing little hope of future financial viability, Conrail did not attempt to revive the remaining section of the High Line after the completion of the Javits Center. The most recent section, connecting the current southern terminus at Gansevoort Street to Banks Street, was removed as recently as 1991 (La Farge, 2012, p. 10).

A project of major capital expense even for the likes of New York, which once had exceptional use value and a repository for significant symbolic capital, the High Line rather quickly became obsolete and a liability. Because it was primarily built over easements, it had no real estate value in itself and a negative value in the significant cost it would take to demolish the structure. The once symbol of modernization was also, in many ways, now a fitting symbol of central city industrial obsolescence and decline. It symbolized the loss of an industrial center: the outmoded rail infrastructure that once made the industrial city the center of economic life. And, of course, this was true in many cities. Detroit’s Central Station, grand but never completed and decaying, shifted from a symbol of outsized hope for the future to arguably the preeminent

symbol of Detroit's decay. Elevated rail viaducts became one of the most visible remnants of the lifeblood of the now decaying industrial cities of the world, particularly in the United States, where truck transport and personal vehicles so nearly obliterated railways.

Coming infamously close to filing for municipal bankruptcy in 1975, much of the City of New York was still suffering through difficult economic times in 1980. For many, the High Line was a relic in a forgotten corner of the still (but far lesser) industrial city, with little hope. However, in a place as dense and active as Manhattan, little is every fully off the map. Anique Hommels has written about the inertia of cities in the face of sociotechnical change, pointing out that "once in place, urban structures become fixed, obdurate, securely anchored in their own history and in the histories of surrounding structures" (2008, p. 10). Despite the fact that developers, politicians, and even most residents wanted the obsolete High Line structure torn down and wiped away, it proved obdurate. Though considered by most to be technically obsolete, it was enmeshed in legal and economic structures that made it hard to simply remove. Not only a technical artifact, it also remained as a potential link to an industrial past that was slipping away and as a medium for new imaginings of the neighborhood. The now derelict structure, open to possibilities once freed from its intended use, became a vessel for ideas and dreams for it and the neighborhood. And, just as the demolition of St. John's Chapel engendered some of Manhattan's first historic preservation counter-responses to urban change, the efforts to tear down the High Line, at least post-1960s, sparked some resistance to the relentless, creative destruction of Manhattan.

While to most the High Line seemed to have no future, to some it presented new opportunities – even before it was completely decommissioned. One of the first known proposals of what to do with the now obsolete High Line was architect Steven Holl's 1979 proposal

“Bridge of Houses”: a concept that turns the structure into a shop lined pedestrian promenade with housing above. Though it was an important piece of postmodern architectural thinking and certainly garnered a lot of attention in design circles, it was never really considered as real or viable proposal at the time. Another proposal was John di Domenico’s work on repurposing the High Line in 1983. Di Domenico’s work, which explores multiple uses for the High Line and recommends a reuse plan that is strikingly similar to its eventual redevelopment as a park. This, again, was an important work, though it really was mostly of interest in architectural circles. Holl taught the High Line case in his architecture design studios at Columbia University (GmbH, 2015, p. 13), and Di Domenico used his work to teach architecture students at the New York Institute of Technology. As Ricardo Scofidio, a professor at Cooper Union’s School of Architecture and later a lead designer for the reuse of the High Line noted, it “was a great pedagogical tool. It naturally made its way to schools across the country” (GmbH, 2015, p. 13). While not widely known, these two design projects, marked a crucial turning point in the fate of the High Line. They will be examined further when the origins of the idea for the redevelopment of the High Line is discussed.

It is hard to know influence of Holl’s and Di Domenico’s design project with certainty, but there is scant evidence that they were, at the time, well known or significant catalysts for reconsidering the faded value of the High Line. Though the High Line did garner attention from architects and design circles, it was of little interest to most New Yorkers because of its location in a deindustrialized area with few attractions. However, in a place as dense and active as New York, it was certainly not off the map. As a major piece of infrastructure in an area with many hopes for redevelopment and poor transit connectivity, it was an object of interest. To those who lived, worked in, or otherwise had an interest in the neighborhood, it was mostly just a rusty relic

and probably best removed. To the city, state, and powerful real estate interests, it was, for the most part, a dis-amenity and eyesore that thwarted redevelopment and took up prime land that could be put to higher and better use. To some, it was different opportunity altogether.

While it is problematic to make a period of the history character driven, there was one person who was of particular importance to the High line's fate in the 1980s and 90s: Peter Obletz. He was, according to his *New York Times* obituary, "a dance-company manger and railroad buff who lived aboard two dinning cars parked behind Pennsylvania Station in the 1970s and 80s . . . above all he was a rail buff" (Barron, 1996). He was a member of Community Board 4 in the 1980s, one of the two Community Boards that the High Line runs through; he consulted for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority on subway advertising; and he was, for a short time, an owner of the High Line. From his eccentric abode of a rail car parked in Hudson Yards behind Pennsylvania Station, Obletz could see the mysterious hulk of the High Line running downtown. He first made his way onto the High Line in 1982 (Barron, 1996). As one writer tells it: "He found an outdoor metal staircase 17 feet high, climbed it, and walked onto what he said looked like a broad, ramshackle highway cutting through the Chelsea section and into Greenwich Village. For two miles, from 34th Street to Washington Street, he ambled in silence unusual for Manhattan – over weeds, over garbage, and more important to him, over railroad tracks" (Gottlieb, 1984, p. B.1). Up on the High Line, he was moved by what he saw: "It was terra incognito up there. Unrestricted space. Unimaginable tranquility. It was like looking at the city through a glass bowl" (Gottlieb, 1984, p. B.1; La Farge, 2012, p. 188).

Obletz's experience introduces two central early themes about the High Line as a phenomenon. The first is the new illicit or semi-illicit exploration of a post-industrial infrastructure – places not open or designed for the public that have become places for

adventurous urban explorers or, in some cases, open secrets traveled by many but still titillating through the rawness of adventure. This is a theme of discovery, exploration, and opening up parts of the city to the wider public. Oblatz was among the early explorers of the disused structure that helped cut the initial ‘desire lines’ on the High Line’s increasingly grassy surface and marked its attractiveness to visitors. His craving to see what was up there, the possibilities of the once off-limits industrial infrastructure, resonates through the High Line phenomenon.

Until the early 1990s, access to the deck of the no longer active High Line was an open secret; its many poorly secured entry points made getting onto it rather easy. John Di Domenico took groups of students from his classes at the New York Institute of Technology there, for site visits in broad daylight without any resistance. Over time, the High Line developed signs of steady use, with obvious paths worn into its vegetation and gravel. The industrial buildings connected to the High Line also gave direct access for some of the artists and loft dwellers who made it a kind of semi-private backyard. Photographs of the High Line before its redevelopment show all these signs clearly. Although accessing it was illegal, the High Line became an informal open space for the surrounding neighborhoods and was not exceptionally hard to access if one knew how, even when security measures were stepped up in the early 1990s. This, as will be seen, is true of other sites associated with the High Line phenomenon, and it also represents underlying concepts of the phenomenon as one of exploration and taking back space.

A second theme here is the notion of seeing the city through a new lens, a new and novel vantage point. Seeing the city differently, though observation towers and other means, is nothing new and is expanded upon later as well. But Mr. Oblatz was probably the first to enter this notion into the discourse of the High Line. As a freight line, it had not offered the public the views afforded by New York’s formerly extensive elevated rail line network. The views it offered had

only been enjoyed by rail workers. The High Line has a particularly picturesque setting, with sweeping views of the Hudson River and down the canyon-like streets of New York (although many of these moving views are being lost to the development that the redeveloped High Line had pushed into overdrive). While the importance of the dense, enveloping context should not be forgotten, this opening up of new perspectives and experiences is a persistent and important theme for the High Line as a site and a phenomenon.

Mr. Oblatz, a “train buff’s train buff” (Gill, 2007, p. CY8), was smitten. Conrail, seeing no use for the line and not wanting to maintain it indefinitely, planned on applying to the Interstate Commerce Commission for approval to decommission and divest the structure (Gottlieb, 1984, p. B.1). Mr. Oblatz feared the High Line would be sold to developers and destroyed (Gottlieb, 1984, p. B.1). Seeing an opportunity to save the High Line, he bought the remaining two-mile section from Conrail for \$10 and planned to buy an old locomotive and passenger cars for \$250,000 from the Jacob K Javits Convention Center for use as a tourist attraction and park-and-ride lot (Barron, 1996).

Though it seems shocking that Mr. Oblatz could buy the High Line for so little, or buy it at all, it was the understandable result of both the overriding desire for Conrail to divest of liabilities and the particular rules for decommissioning rail lines. As much of the High Line is built over easements, if the rail line is decommissioned then the owner would be responsible for demolition costs and the full use of the underlying properties would revert to the owners of the property released from the easement. Conrail would have little left to sell other than scrap metal from demolition. At the time of sale to Oblatz, the High Line was estimated to be a \$5 million dollar demolition liability for Conrail (Gray, 1988). Conrail, an entity set up to absorb bankrupt railroads, was far from awash in resources that would not produce revenue. As well, Oblatz’s

plan had a procedural edge. Divestiture of the line by Conrail required approval of the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC), and Commission rules required giving a potential rail use first right of refusal to acquire the line before decommissioning (Gottlieb, 1984, p. B.1).

Mr. Oblatz created a non-profit called the West Side Rail Line, Inc. (also referred to as the West Side Rail Development Foundation) to acquire the High Line and organized 300 members who were interested in the preservation of the High Line (Gottlieb, 1984, p. B.1). He planned to carry tourists for amusement, ferry visitors to the Jacob K. Javits Center between the parking lots along the line, and maybe even haul some freight in the unlikely return of more industry. But he also had long term goals. By persevering the rail line, he hoped to keep it in play for future transportation use, envisioning the line linked again with the northern section to create a commuter line to the Bronx (Gottlieb, 1984, p. B.1). While he wanted to save the line from developers, he was not anti-development. He believed the revived High Line would provide transit for the growing residential neighborhood and claimed it “could pull development over to the far West Side just the way the City of New York grew up along the elevated lines in Brooklyn and the Bronx at the turn of the Century” (Gottlieb, 1984, p. B.1).

Some were skeptical of Mr. Oblatz’s motives, noting his backing from some real estate firms, including his father’s, and claimed that he was aiming to sell development rights to property owners under the High Line’s easements (Polsky, 1987, p. 27). Though this would have been rather difficult to pull off under ICC rules, at least for the first five years, the concerns were not without merit, as it would have eventually been a possible use of his control. Despite the fact that most accounts portray him as a dyed in the wool rail buff, the veracity of these accusations may never be known. In his defense, Oblatz served on Community Board 4 until 1991 and was more a thorn in the side of real estate developers than a kindred spirit; in particular, he fought the

developers' removal of SRO housing for the very low income residents of the area (M. Moss, 1990, p. 27).

His contention that converting the High Line to mass transit would help redevelop the West Side was an important one. Transit has historically played a key role in the development of New York, and the areas around the High Line had some of the poorest mass transit connectivity in Manhattan, save parts of the Lower East Side and East Village. The closest subway line to the High Line, prior to the extension of the 7 Train in 2016, was the 8th Avenue Line. Turning the High Line into an extension of the mass transit system would have serviced new areas and, to most observers, looked like a natural addition to the system. This got the attention of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), which helped prompt the City Planning Department to study the High Line for mass transit viability (Gottlieb, 1984, p. B.1). Oblatz had big visions, even suggesting that the southern section of the High Line that was demolished in the 1960s could be rebuilt to extend the line south (Gottlieb, 1984, p. B.1). The MTA saw potential in at least part of Oblatz's vision, with one representative of the organization saying, "it might be nice have something like this in the bank, maybe 20 years from now" (Gottlieb, 1984, p. B.1). However, the City Planning Department did not share his enthusiasm and saw little viability in the line for transit, though they did agree to keep it under consideration (Gottlieb, 1984, p. B.1).

Mr. Oblatz made the argument that "[o]nce you lose a rail line, you never get it back," his ideas were generally not well received. While there seemed to be a strong rational transportation planning basis for banking the High Line, power and politics did not support it. Most nearby residents showed little enthusiasm for his idea. A couple of homeowners whose homes faced the High Line in the Meat Packing District wrote a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, saying

they were “horrified to read about Peter Obletz’s campaign to reinstate railroad service along the two-mile stretch of” the High Line (Straus & Schoonver, 1984, p. A16). Along with claiming, oddly, that the areas along the High Line are serviced by “numerous subway lines” (their homes would be among the closest in the High Line’s adjacent neighborhoods to the 8th Ave Line that has multiple trains, but multiple subways do not even come near the area) they also assert that “these emerging neighborhoods would be best served by tearing down the tracks and putting the land to residential or commercial uses consistent with the character and scale of the surrounding neighborhoods” (Straus & Schoonver, 1984, p. A16). Another letter to the editor of the *New York Times* on the following day did endorse the idea, however, suggesting other abandoned rights of way that could be banked and put back to transportation use (Kuntz, 1984). Notably, this letter mentions another project described later as motivated by the success of the High Line and embroiled in a debate about its potential for transportation, the Queensway. That letter aside, the wariness of reusing the High Line for any kind of transportation was widespread among the residents of the local neighborhoods.

More so than residents, many property owners were adamantly set against the reuse of the High Line. The real estate community, in particular those with properties under High Line easements, eventually banded to form what was called the Chelsea Property Owners (CPO), led by one of the principals of property owner Edison Properties (David et al., 2002, p. 51). The first legal challenges to Obletz’s ownership came from a combination of the city, state, and property owners: “The State Transportation Department and the city objected, fearing that Obletz and his nonprofit West Side Rail Line Development Foundation wouldn’t be able to cover their potential liabilities – such as paying for tearing the line down if the foundation went bankrupt. So did the local property owners, including the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center and the Madison Square

Garden Corp., which wants to build an arena just south of the center” (Polsky, 1987, p. 27). They filed legal challenges against the ICC’s approval of the High Line’s sale to Obletz’s group in 1986 (David et al., 2002, p. 52).

The State Transportation Department and the City agreed with property owners about challenging Obletz’s ownership, but they did not have exactly the same aims. The State Transportation Department worried that Obletz’s plans would interfere with their plans for the Westway, an ill-fated large freeway project to replace the West Side Highway that was opposed by community groups (David et al., 2002, p. 52). The city worried that Obletz’s ownership would interfere with their plans for the redevelopment of the West Side (David et al., 2002, p. 52). The City had applied for a federal grant to investigate putting a light rail line on the High Line, extending up the West Side on the old right of way (Gottlieb, 1986, p. E7), and it was awarded in 1987 (Polsky, 1987, p. 27). The line was envisioned to serve burgeoning developments on the West Side, such as the then under construction Battery Park City, a proposed development by the infamous Donald Trump, as well as the convention center. The light rail plan, however, ran into staunch opposition. A local state senator called it “the Yuppie Express,” the MTA ended up balking at a new line while it struggled to maintain its existing system, and citizen groups, wary of the mega developments targeting their neighborhood, actively opposed it (Gottlieb, 1986, p. E7). Incongruous with his other statements, Obletz opposed the light rail plan too, being quoted as saying that the city was “trying to drive manufacturing out of Manhattan” (Gottlieb, 1986, p. E7).

Obletz’s hope for an industrial resurgence in the neighborhood and, more so, that a freight line would again become viable because of it seems far-fetched. Although there was still an active meatpacking industry, it was neither burgeoning nor in need of high volume rail

service. The remaining industrial buildings were quickly being converted into art galleries, artists' studios, and lofts. As an illustration, by 1987 two of the four industrial buildings that the High Line so impressively runs through had already been converted into residential use (Polsky, 1987, p. 27). It did not seem like anyone held out hope for an industrial resurgence and the neighborhood was steadily becoming more residential, basically precluding a return to industrial uses. A possibly explanation is that Obletz desperately wanted to hold onto the High Line and, his appeal to the ICC pending, he needed to make it seem as there was a potential freight use.

Unsurprisingly, the ICC was unconvinced by his arguments. In 1987, after four years of contestation, the ICC ruled that he should not have been able to buy the line from Conrail because they did not believe Obletz could generate with enough business to justify its use, though Obletz and his supporters appealed (Polsky, 1987, p. 27). The property was returned to Conrail. Obletz tried to rally support for his cause, including penning an editorial in *New York Newsday* pleading to save the line for transit, and pointing out the way developers are “twisting [government agencies’] arms” in their push for demolition (Obletz, 1988, p. 54). Though he did convince more people to take the preservation of the line seriously, Obletz’s appeal to regain ownership was denied by the ICC in 1989. This brought an end to his ownership of the High Line, though not his influence.

Property owners, having removed Obletz’s ownership as an obstacle, pushed for the demolition of the High Line. The CPO contended that the line had effectively already been legally abandoned and that the easements over their properties had lapsed (Gray, 1988). They filed an “adverse abandonment” application in 1989 that, if approved, would force Conrail to tear down the High Line and its easements to cease (David et al., 2002, p. 52).

Conrail, however, was again stuck with a liability, as it did not want to maintain or pay to remove the High Line. Most of the CPO continued to press for adverse abandonment, hoping they would get the High Line removed and the easements returned at no cost. Rockrose Development Corporation, one of the parties to challenge Obletz's ownership and one of New York City's largest developers, decided that the opportunity to build on property they owned under the High Line was worth taking on the cost of demolition. Rockrose agreed to pay Conrail for the cost of demolition in order to build an apartment project that stretched through five blocks of the High Line, south of its current terminus at Gansevoort Street (David et al., 2002, pp. 52–53).

Rockrose's view of the High Line as an impediment to neighborhood redevelopment at the time reflected that of the real estate development community at large. The company's Director of Planning said that the structure "creates a lot of problems" for security, safety, cleanliness, and aesthetics, and that the neighborhood will be better upon its removal (Dunlap, 1991a, p. B1). Rockrose already owned buildings on the west side of the High Line and, reflecting the more postmodern concern that elevated structures are barriers and impediments, he asserted that it "is an unpleasant, dark thing to walk under" and "places our buildings on the wrong side of the tracks from the West Village and the West Village on the wrong side of the tracks from the waterfront" (Dunlap, 1991a, p. B1). Rockrose's approach to redevelopment in the area, which represented the views of other development interests at the time, required the removal of the High Line in order to extend the value of the already popular West Village into the West Side area.

Rockrose did encounter some unexpected pushback, though not enough to slow their plans. In an unexpected turn, Community Board 4 adopted a resolution in 1990 calling for the

“retention” of the High Line “pending further study of reuse options by Conrail or others” (David et al., 2002, p. 52). But at this point, in addition to more general concerns about the impact of new development, most of the preservation focus was about potential transportation uses (Dunlap, 1991a, p. B1). On January 7, 1991, Rockrose began the demolition of five blocks of the High Line, and what was left of it remained in a kind of limbo. Conrail considered the use of the remaining line north of Gansevoort Street for trash hauling (Dunlap, 1991a, p. B1, 1991b), though unsurprisingly that did not get far with the mostly residential and creative services neighbors that had replaced the industrial area by that time. In 1992, the ICC agreed to withdraw its jurisdiction over the High Line as a working railway, allowing for the finding of adverse demolition but only on the condition that Conrail is indemnified from all costs of removal exceeding \$7 million (“Chelsea Property Owners-Abandonment-Portion of the Consolidated Rail Corporation’s West 30th Street Secondary Track in New York, NY,” 2003, pp. 34696–34697). As estimates would put actual demolition costs at around \$30 million, this left both sides at a stalemate – Conrail wanting to avoid spending \$7 million and property owners not wanting to make up the significant difference.

Little happened with this new High Line stalemate until 1999. Peter Oblatz remained active in the local Community Board concerning transportation issues in New York. However, the last major change he saw of the High Line was probably the demolition of the five-block portion by Rockrose Development. He died of cancer at only 50 years old in 1996 (Barron, 1996, p. 50) and did not get to know the fate of the High Line. But Oblatz, no matter how quixotic and relatively short lived his involvement with the High Line was, played a central role in complicating and sustaining the debate over its demolition or reuse; if anything, he may have at least slowed the wheels of demolition enough to make its redevelopment possible. In his

efforts to keep control of the High Line and, presumably despite his skeptics' charges, preserve it, he was said to have bandied about multiple ideas for the reuse of the High Line: "[H]e has talked of jogging paths, restaurants, open space, commuter, trollies and tourist trains for the line" (Polsky, 1987, p. 27). This makes him among the earliest envisioning the redevelopment of the High Line into a linear park. At the time, a former senior level planner at the City of New York said that he was a "visionary of sorts," but that "I don't know what it adds up to" (Polsky, 1987, p. 27). If anything, Obletz was a forceful and public advocate of seeing the High Line not as a liability but as an asset. He helped plant a seed that would change the conversation about the High Line.

As the economy rebounded, pressure mounted from the CPO and the very pro-demolition Giuliani administration, putting increasing pressure Conrail to demolish the eyesore of a structure and free up valuable land for development. It looked increasingly likely that the High Line would be demolished. However, this period of limbo for the High Line in the 1990s was one of increasingly rapid change for the neighborhood. Despite the hulking disamenity of the High Line, the neighborhood was starting a rather typical process of regeneration and gentrification (at least for New York). Starting in the 1980s and accelerating in the early 1990s, art galleries, lofts, and "new media" companies had taken a liking to the neighborhood. By the mid-1990, an upscaling of the neighborhood was underway. A key sign of this was the opening of the Chelsea Market: a luxury food hall on the ground floor of the old Nabisco factory in the Gansevoort Market Historic District. Opened in 1997, the Chelsea Market is filled with high end food stalls and quickly became a major tourist destination. It established the neighborhood as a destination, putting it on the map, so to speak, well before the establishment of the High Line. It also connected the ever-higher end present of the neighborhood with its historical role as a center

of food distribution. While the Chelsea Market and the High Line seem to work hand-in-hand as connected tourist attractions today (the Nabisco building is one of the four buildings that the High Line goes through), at the time the Market's success intensified the CPO's interest in getting the High Line removed. The neighborhood had become established as a site for real estate investment, and rising values ramped up pressure by real estate interests to remove the derelict structure. The area around the High Line was still mostly industrially zoned and, while that did allow some existing buildings to convert into residential use, that limited new construction (David et al., 2002, p. 66). When a nearby section of 23rd Street was rezoned to allow new residential development prior to the High Line's redevelopment, "new construction occurred almost immediately" (David et al., 2002, p. 66).

Sensing that the removal of the High Line was inevitable, the owners of some of the properties under High Line sold them to speculators at prices reflecting their potential value with the easements vacated. Since the construction of the High Line, the properties under the High Line had lower value uses, like parking lots and small car repair shops. The speculation on these properties amped up the pressure to remove the High Line and recoup the value for their purchasers.

In April 1999, the City of New York, led by the Giuliani Administration and the CPO, filled a \$150 million lawsuit against Conrail to force it to repair or completely remove the High Line and pay for the damage to adjacent properties that was caused by falling debris (Kilgannon, 1999). At the same time, the City of New York issues 63 notices of safety code violations for the High Line to bolster the lawsuit and create bad publicity for the owner of the High Line. As the City's economy gained steam and the neighborhood became increasingly viable new territory for the island's real estate interests, politicians and allied development interests pushed even harder

to remove the High Line. Conrail still asserted that the structure was safe and reuse was under consideration. But Conrail was not the target of the push anymore. CSX, a private railroad giant, was in the process of purchasing some of the assets of Conrail and, as part of deal that required them to take liabilities with assets, would acquire the High Line. This new push was a targeted effort to force the deeper pocketed CSX to take the financial hit and remove the High Line, which was estimated to cost significantly less than the \$150 million that the suit sought for damages. CSX, like most railroads that enjoyed strong and longstanding legal protections, did not give in easily and claimed that they were considering reactivating the line as well. Interestingly, the *New York Times* article covering the lawsuit and code violations mentions at the very end that “[o]ther proposed uses have included allowing artist to paint it, and turning it into a promenade” (Kilgannon, 1999, p. CY8). It is not clear what the source of this idea was, but the quote is a small example of how, once the idea of repurposing the High Line entered into the discourse, it never went away.

CSX, spitting Conrail’s assets with Norfolk Southern, officially took control of the High Line on June 1, 1999 and started actively looking for ways to avoid being forced to tear down the High Line and absorb the cost. It is this desire to find a solution that would save CSX money that is probably the single most important cause of the High Line’s obduracy and redevelopment. To avoid the cost of demolition, CSX hired the Regional Planning Association (RPA) in 1999 to develop alternatives to tearing down the High Line. The RPA is one of the United States oldest and most venerable planning organizations. Founded in 1922, it is a professional planning organization focused on the greater New York metropolitan region (though they also take national projects as well), and it tackles a full range of urban planning and development issues. The High Line project was managed by Jeff Zupan, a Senior Fellow specializing in

transportation at the RPA. Zupan is a seasoned planner with 48 years of experience in transportation planning in the New York region. Trained and registered in civil and transportation engineering, Zupan's work and background are classic modern planning. A consummate New Yorker, one could easily imagine him in faded black and white photos, standing next to Lewis Mumford or Robert Moses, and showing off a site plan (though he is a contemporary of that particular period and Mumford was primarily involved with a related, though different, organization).

CSX's leadership understood that the only way to avoid being forced to tear down the High Line was to find a transportation use that "railbanked" the structure. Railbanking is an activity allowed under the National Trails System Act of 1983, in which a railroad can allow the use of the rail structure and right of way while preserving it for potential future transportation use. Such a designation would allow CSX to avoid having to pay for tearing down the High Line and also preserve the easements underneath. Zupan was charged to think as expansively as possible in order to find something that CSX could "hang their hat on" that would turn the tide of public opinion and allow railbanking (personal communication, November 15, 2016). He put together a team of advisors to work on the project, including Robert Lane, an urban designer at RPA, Robert Olmsted of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and Herbert Levinson, a transportation consultant. On May 20, 1999, this group of advisors, along with some other invited guests, met to "bring knowledgeable people in transportation, public works, development, housing, land use, open space, and urban design to consider all possible uses for the High Line" (Regional Plan Association, 1999, p. 3).

On June 21, 1999, they produced a final draft report for CSX, titled *What to Do with the High Line* (Regional Plan Association, 1999). It is a rather short document, at 35 pages, but quite

shrewd and insightful. It states that the High Line's "most important attribute is simply that it is there, not an inconsiderable advantage in an age when constructing anything new is virtually impossible in a built-up environment" (Regional Plan Association, 1999, p. 4). It recognizes the growing pressure to find a use for the High Line as "developers look for new frontiers in Manhattan, particularly on the relatively underdeveloped West Side" (Regional Plan Association, 1999, p. 4). The report notes the surrounding area's shift from industrial to residential. While the meatpacking industry still held on around Gansevoort Street, there were limited industrial uses left. It predicted that zoning changes would catch up with the residential shift and further spark the development of a primarily commercial and residential West Side. This transformation would be accentuated by the recent beginnings of the Hudson River Park, a major new waterfront park on the West Side that would provide new amenities to the generally park-poor area and potentially draw new visitors to the area as a whole.

The report was astute towards the spatial politics of the High Line as a physical structure, as well. Because the High Line runs through blocks and not down the middle of streets, it is not as conspicuous as many of the more common elevated railways that used to run down Manhattan's streets and still existed in the outer boroughs:

The High Line is structurally strong, having been built to carry heavy freight operations. Despite its heft, it is relatively inconspicuous, becoming most visible where it crosses east-west streets. Yet, some see it as an eyesore, and it does require ongoing maintenance. Its inconspicuousness is one of its virtues when concerns about community impact are heard, but it can be a liability if many people are hardly aware it is there, and the intended purposes is to attract people to it. (Regional Plan Association, 1999, p. 5)

The High Line’s tracks, cutting through blocks and reflecting the big ambitions of the West Side Improvement Project and the fluidity of the once industrial area, produced a liminal position that enhanced its obduracy. Because there were no noisy trains running down the tracks, people barely noticed it or cared strongly about its presence – unless it was pointed out to them. Likewise, the report recognized that the High Line had to directly offer something of interest to the existing residents if it was to be saved.

The report offered seven types of suggested possible reuses for the High Line, all under the rather stretched theme of “transit.” These included subway, light rail, rubber-tire transit, other transit uses (such as rail storage facility), truckway, waste transfer, and recreational purposes. With specific options identified under subway, light rail, and greenway, 14 options for potential uses were identified and then evaluated by using a matrix. There were 10 evaluation criteria used (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR RPA REPORT

Benefits to Corridor Transit	Benefits to Regional Transit	Impact of Existing Transportation Network	Potential for Amenities	Likely Community Reaction
Dependence on More Intense Land Use	Government Attitudes	Cost	Public Subsidy	Time Frame

As these indicators show, it was framed as a rational analysis with the focus primarily on transportation benefits and feasibility.

Based on the matrix evaluation, six options were retained for presentation: both greenway options, one bus option, and all three light rail options. The light rail options were considered potentially redundant with the plans at the time for a light rail along 42nd Street and 33rd or 34th Street, but they were kept for their strong benefits and potential otherwise. The bus transit option was “small environmentally benign vehicles to move people in a linear park-like setting on the High Line, consistent with the greenway concepts” (Regional Plan Association, 1999, p. 19). The

greenway options were the top recommendations, with the most favorable profile in the matrix. The two favored concepts were a “string of beads,” a concept that focused on each segment crossing the street to be a parklet, and the “street in the air,” which would line the High Line with shops (Regional Plan Association, 1999, p. 20). Although these two options were specifically different from the High Line of today, fundamentally they are the same idea.

Analysis in hand, Zupan and the RPA, with CSX, began an effort to turn the public’s attention, which had been largely dominated by calls for its removal, to the idea of reusing the High Line. The report was sent to city officials and Community Boards located around the High Line. On July 25, 1999, the *New York Times* ran an article covering the report’s suggestions for future uses and quoting the CSX spokesperson who was plainly asserting, “We are trying to avoid tearing it down, and would consider turning it over to a public entity or entrepreneurs” (Lueck, 1999, p. L23). This article not only presented ideas for the High Line’s reuse, it also kicked off a battle for public opinion.

Property owners and Giuliani Administration members condemned CSX. An owner of a parcel bisected by the High Line (and under its easement), in a rather ironic choice of words, criticized CSX as such: “It’s all about the money, and they are trying to stall . . . By dragging its feet CSX is just maintaining the blight on the West Side of Manhattan” (Lueck, 1999, p. L23). Joseph Rose, at the time the City Planning Commissioner, poked at CSX’s attempt to justify rail-banking the High Line said that the “platform has no right to be there except for transportation, and that use is long gone” (Lueck, 1999, p. L23). Rose further went on to assert that his planning staff had evaluated the High Line numerous times over the previous decade, and its reuse as a public amenity, by any group, would be infeasible. But Debra Frank, a planner hired by CSX to evaluate and advocate for reuse, argued that the proposed improvement to make the High Line a

public space was doable for a private group and “we don’t see this as a very major amount or a deterrent” (Lueck, 1999, p. L23). Well known architect Peter Eisenman led credence to CSX’s argument for the preservation of the High Line by saying in the *New York Times* that “[i]t would be fantastic” and linking the idea to (unsurprisingly, given his body of work) modernist ideas of future urbanism in Manhattan: “We have to begin thinking about a city with mixed uses and different levels . . . Having walkways or roads running into buildings above the street would be a stunning architectural achievement” (Lueck, 1999, p. L23). Such sentiments bring the early modern vision of a grade separated, multilayered Manhattan as illustrated by urbanists such as Hugh Ferriss (1929), into the conversation.

The battle lines had been laid out. Each side was coming from what they believed to be rational positions about the future of an obsolete relic or a unique opportunity in a changing urban environment. And each had very specific financial interests driving their positions, albeit mixed with a whiff of the always-attendant jockeying for the successful proving of power that happens among real estate issues (which, at this point, was really what it was about). That the planners who supported the High Line’s reuse were paid for such advocacy does not mean they were either irrational or prescient. Those who advocated for its demolition also believed their logic and analysis rational, though they were clearly aligned with specific financial interests. Not only was the development community deeply aligned with the Giuliani Administration, City Planning Commissioner and fierce opponent of the High Line, Joseph Rose, also put City planners staunchly on the developer’s side.

Notably, Joseph Rose came not from urban planning but real estate development. His father was the Chairman of the developer Rose Associates, and Joseph was the son-in-law of Marshall Rose, owner of the Georgetown Company. Both firms owned properties in West

Manhattan, with the Georgetown Company most notably owning the Frank Gehry designed IAC building just west of the High Line. As Planning Commission Chair Rose said in public at a Manhattan conference that the Far West Side, which includes the areas around the High Line, are “our birthright . . . our future, our growth potential” (in Brash, 2011, p. 144). To what degree Rose’s inheritance of this birthright as the progeny of a major real estate family influenced his and his planning staff’s analysis of the High Line situation is hard to say for certain. But what is clear is that Rose was part of a faction of development and planning actors that held not only financial and political power, but the perspective that shaped the rationality and vision of the future of the High Line and the surrounding neighborhood. The pro-demolition side had the upper hand of then current ideas about the proper urban future. At this point, they were mostly thwarted by the unique legal, physical, and socio-political obduracy of the High Line. But soon, these powerful opponents of the High Line would face the increasingly active insertion of alternative visions of the future into the public dialogue and, with it, a political and rhetorical shift in power.

Chapter III **Changing the Conversation and Making Friends: The Battle to Reuse the High Line**

At the end of the 1990s, the two sides – those who wanted to demolish the High Line and those who wanted to keep it – were battling not only for power, but also for the public sentiment and imagination. While Holl, di Domenico, Oblatz, and likely others had planted seeds of alternative scenarios for the future of the High Line, resulting in varying degrees of public attention, to most people involved the case for demolition remained the most imaginable and serious scenario. But at that point, those alternative ideas had been percolating for at least 20 years. The July 1999 *New York Times* article that framed alternative futures for the High Line as feasible according to respected experts appears to have been a key turning point. It not only threw alternative scenarios for the future of the High Line into a wide public discourse, it caught the attention of two West Chelsea residents who would turn out to be among the most important actors in redeveloping the High Line.

The two residents are Robert Hammond and Joshua David. They are the founders of Friends of the High Line (FHL), the organization that spearheaded the redevelopment of the High Line and, therefore, is central to its contemporary story. There are many sources for the narrative of the redevelopment of the High Line, most with a strong boosterish slant. Hammond and David's *High Line: The Inside Story of New York City's Park In the Sky*, in particular, provides a useful history that holds up well against other sources, though it comes from a particular and somewhat self-serving perspective (2011). Robert Hammond and Joshua David

were two longtime residents of the West Side neighborhoods surrounding the High Line. Hammond had moved to the neighborhood in 1993 and David in 1986 (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 3). They both represented the neighborhood's shift away from industrial uses and warehouses to young, creative industry residents willing to endure a still gritty mix of industrial and arts uses with limited services and transportation access in return for some cost savings. Neither Hammond nor David had really paid much attention to the High Line for the decade and more that each had lived in the area (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 4). Like the RPA report had noted, it was hidden just enough to be out of mind for most residents.

The first time the High Line caught Robert Hammond's attention was in the July 1999 article in the *New York Times* (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 5). Hammond was intrigued and liked the idea:

The summer of 1999, I read a piece in *The New York Times* that said that Mayor Giuliani's administration was trying to tear down the High Line. The Times ran a little map of it, and you could see that the High Line was continuous, a mile and half of rail tracks running through Manhattan. That's what really got me interested in it, the idea that this industrial relic had lasted so long and was about to be torn down. (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 5)

Here, Hammond not only points to the importance of the *Times* article, but also the theme of discovery that would become key to sparking wider public imagination around the High Line. Hammond had lived in the neighborhood for nearly 15 years and did not even know that the High Line was a continuous structure running through the West Side. It was a discovery of something that had been in in plain sight all along, as it would be to many other New Yorkers.

David, a freelance writer, discovered the High Line around the same time, through an article contract to document the already rapidly changing West Chelsea neighborhood for a magazine. Despite living near the High Line for over half a decade, he had the same revelation as Hammond when carefully examining the neighborhood for his assignment: “That is when I began paying attention to the High Line, really looking up at it for the first time, because it was everywhere, running over every block. It was about thirty feet tall, and you couldn’t see what was on top it, but the rusting Art Deco railing gave it a sense of lost beauty” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 6). The intrigued David went on to inquire about the High Line and learned about its basic status as well as its well-known, seedy side as a dark and semi-private “sex spot” for some nearby gay bars (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 6). Like Hammond, David too read the July 1999 *New York Times* article and was motivated to call the people it quoted in order to find out if anyone was organizing to save the High Line (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 6). As David’s story indicates, he also experienced a process of discovering something he had lived adjacent to for years. The *Times* article, by legitimizing the notion of saving the High Line, was critical to planting the idea that something could be done with it other than demolition.

At this point, CSX’s effort to undermine the demolition narrative appeared to be bearing modest fruit. Now that they had sent the RPA report to leaders and community groups, as well as garnering important press for their alternative scenarios for the High Line, the next step in their anti-demolition effort (or, more precisely, anti-CSX spending money on demolition effort) was to present their case directly to the public. New York has a system of Community Boards that, while they do not have the final say on issues, are entitled to weigh in on most urban planning and development decisions for their neighborhood and also carry significant political weight in their decisions. Most of the High Line runs through Community Board 4. A representative from

the presented their report on the High Line at the August 1999 Community Board 4 meeting. Despite the media coverage, the topic did not attract many people to the meeting, with Hammond estimating 20 or so in attendance (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 7). This meeting was where Hammond and David first met, David saying that he chose to sit next to Hammond because he “thought he was cute” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 7). As part of the agenda, the RPA representative provided various proposed alternatives, with the greenway options being the most preferred. Hammond recalls the response of the crowd as less than enthusiastic: “After the RPA presented a bunch of people got up and spoke about why it was a bad idea to reuse the High Line. . . A whole litany of arguments, and really vehement. I was surprised at how strongly these people felt. I had been thinking about speaking at the meeting, but not after all that” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 7). Those speaking out against the High Line included the CPO, which did not miss an opportunity to malign the continuing existence of the High Line. The only other audience member Hammond could find who supported saving the High Line was David, sitting right next to him. This is how the two met, and “that was the genesis of Friends of the High Line” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 8).

Making Friends

Hammond and David looked for anyone else already organizing for the High Line, and they quickly found they were the only people optimistic enough to even consider it. They began to correspond about how to proceed and realized that the first step was to form a community group that could act as the champion of the maligned structure. The two tapped into their impressive network of family and friends. Both had East Coast Ivy League educations and a strong network of contacts in New York. Hammond’s best friend from college, who worked for a well-connected developer not involved with the CPO, was their first step (David & Hammond,

2011, p. 9). Following that, Hammond and David met with Debra Frank, an urban planner and consultant hired by the CSX to advocate for reuse of the High Line; she was interviewed in the July 1999 *New York Times* article (David & Hammond, 2011, pp. 11–12). Frank explained more details about CSX’s position, which was essentially one of trying to divest itself of the liability regardless if that meant the High Line became a park or was demolished, as long as someone else paid for the conversion or the demolition. CSX would be happy to work with them to find a way to turn it into a park, as long as that condition was met.

Hammond and David pressed on, and through their personal networks they developed a growing cadre of interested people who began working with them. They named their budding organization Friends of the High Line, because it “was neutral as possible” due to leaving out obvious but potentially politically inflammatory words, such as “preservation” and “park” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 11). Once she was convinced they were a serious organization, Frank took them on a tour of the High Line, where their wonder about the hidden space above them was piqued by the full discovery of a wild, open space floating above the thick of Manhattan. Hammond, David, and the others were sold; they had to save the High Line. Over time, others who they arranged to take up onto the High Line would have a similar experience: “A few would say, ‘This just looks like a field of weeds; they should tear this down.’ But most people were moved by it. You brought them up, you showed it to them, and they would do anything for the High Line after that” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 13).

Friends of the High Line continued to gain converts, but their enemies held tight. The Giuliani Administration and CPO remained dead set on demolition and insisted that it be paid for by CSX. Hammond recognized that their “most daunting opponents were the property owners who’d backed the demolition effort for years” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 13). But they

pressed on. A friend of David's told them about the Promenade Plantée in Paris, France, a precedent for an urban park on a disused elevated railway that they should investigate. David was already headed to Paris that Thanksgiving, and he checked it out. The Promenade Plantée, completed in 1993, is a three-mile linear park and path through the 12th Arrondissement of Paris. A significant portion of the Promenade is the Viaduct des Arts: a once-decommissioned elevated stone and brick rail viaduct converted into an elevated park. The Promenade Plantée was not, as is often said in various news media, the inspiration for the High Line, but it made an important impression on Hammond and David: "People had done this, they had built stairs, and now people were going up them and using this elevated park. It had become part of the neighborhood. So it was not a totally insane idea. It had happened in Paris, and it could happen in New York City" (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 14).

Further emboldened by a precedent and the notion that if it can happen in Paris it can happen in New York, Hammond and David began to actively publicize Friends of the High Line and their mission. A presentation at Community Boards 4 and 2 (the other Community Board that a small portion of the High Line runs through) had a lackluster response (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 14). But Hammond and David were astute about marketing and social media. Hammond was a business consultant who worked in online marketing and David was a writer for popular magazines. Their experiences clearly translated to the Friends of the High Line's early media shrewdness, and an unusual (for the time) approach to community organization. While engaging in typical efforts like flyers on lampposts in the neighborhood, creating a slick logo, organizing an email list, and creating a website, they recognized that they needed to do more to get the public's attention (Barlow Rodger, 2010, p. 4). They knew what it took to get the attention of the press in New York: the endorsements of famous people (David &

Hammond, 2011, p. 15). But, in addition to attention, Friends of the High Line needed to change the conversation about the High Line. They needed to imbue it with a new imaginary. Hammond was particularly savvy in this respect, realizing “that more was needed to convey to the public the vision of the High Line that he and David shared. People had to be able to see what it looked like from above as well as below” (Barlow Rodger, 2010, p. 4). The wider public needed to feel a rush of discovery and a spark of imagination about the High Line: a structure that most people barely noticed.

A New Imaginary

Since its obsolescence and during its slow decay, most observers imagined the High Line as a liability standing in the way of progress. It was understood as an artefact that needed to be eliminated; something that must make way for a new era. The eventual reuse and redevelopment of the High Line involved a mix of factors. It required building coalitions and navigating policies, politics, and capital. These are all crucial elements, in both broad strokes and specifically for New York. In particular, Manhattan’s social politics, with its great wealth, celebrity, and elite social gatherings played a unique role in the redevelopment of the High Line. Nevertheless, much of the policy and politics of the High Line are not extraordinary or unique outside of the context of New York. What is truly unique and especially important about the High Line and its later mobilization was the way in which FHL gave the High Line a new imaginary: one of hope and excitement for its existence instead of its absence.

In fall of 1999, Community Board 4 held a community panel on the future of the High Line. Hammond and another member of FHL were invited to present, but so was a representative of the CPO. The response the FHL got from their presentation was skeptical. As David remembers, “person after person stood up and cited all the reasons they thought the High Line

should be torn down” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 19). They also recognized that those who remembered it from when it was operational had no romantic associations – it was noisy and dirty. Newcomers knew it as nothing other than abandoned and decaying. A particularly astute observation that Hammond and David had regarding the public attitude toward the High Line was that “[e]levated structures are vilified because they divide communities” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 19). What they are alluding to is how postmodern urbanism, heavily influenced by the work of Jane Jacobs (1992), had replaced the Modernist vision of good urban places as grade-separated, use-separated and wide open to mixed-use, human-scaled places at street level. The High Line was a grade separated tool for smooth flow of rail cargo above the city, separate from the street and bifurcating the neighborhood — in many ways the antithesis of achieving the broad postmodern vision of a good urban place. This was yet another one of the arguments used by the CPO and others in favor of demolition: that the High Line was barrier to the flow and integrated activities of a good neighborhood. Furthermore, Hammond and David realized that many residents had seen Peter Obletz try and fail to save the High Line (David & Hammond, 2011, pp. 20–21). At this community panel, they realized that it would take a strong dose of excitement and inspiration for any preservation efforts to gain strength again.

The High Line still had a kind of liminal existence in the minds of the general public. FHL need to shift public sentiment by sparking the public imagination of what the future of the High Line could become – changing it to a new imaginary instead of the broken-down relic in the way of progress. Even though the Promenade Plantée set a precedent to what they wanted to do with the High Line, its design was far too tame and its world status far too limited to act as a singular model. There was no design precedent or visual reference point for the concept of the

high-design linear urban park that is the High Line is today. FHL needed to create one from near scratch.

They started with images. The revitalization of the High Line “has always been driven by images” (Friends of the High Line & Diller Scofidio + Renfro, 2008, p. 7). A key first step was photography: “The High Line’s development has been constituted by photography since its inception, as the first push for its preservation was rhetorically organized by images of its ruin and rescue” (Cataldi, Kelley, Kuzmich, Maier-Rothe, & Tang, 2012, p. 360). The FHL revealed images of the little known and seemingly undiscovered wild spaces on top of the High Line to a wider audience. Through the FHL’s growing and mostly elite network, Hammond and David reached out to renowned landscape photographer and West Chelsea resident Joel Sternfeld. They arranged for Sternfeld to get on top of the High Line and determine if it interested him as a project. Once up there, Sternfeld took Hammond aside: “I want to do this. Don’t let anyone else up here for a year. I will give you beautiful photos” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 18). Over the course of the next year, Sternfeld documented the abandoned High Line in all its wild glory, with the grasses, trees, and other plants that had taken root on the structure’s deck over the previous 20 years. The pictures are remarkable, and as a piece of visual discourse they were decidedly on target, with broad, still shots of the abandoned High Line that emphasize its raw juxtaposition with the city. They show open space, the quiet wildness clearly floating above Manhattan but foreign and unknown to most residents, who could only recognize that it was somewhere in the urban landscape that they thought they knew. Sternfeld said of the pictures: “I wanted it to be clear in the pictures that if there was glory in the High Line, it wasn’t due to my skill as a photographer . . . [b]y not borrowing beauty from the sky, the High Line itself is what is important in the picture” (Barlow Rodger, 2010, p. 4). His photographs were displayed at a

gallery opening and also put together as a book that the gallery sold to help raise awareness and funds for the High Line's preservation (Sternfeld, Gopnik, & Stilgoe, 2001).

The photography exhibit was a huge success, and FHL quickly “became a chic cause in the art world” (Barlow Rodger, 2010, p. 4). Following the exhibit, some of the photos were reprinted in a popular article in *The New Yorker* (Gopnik, 2001). These images of a little seen urban wild and their dissemination had their intended effect, and FHL used them as tools for promotion far into the redevelopment process. Even after producing architectural renderings of the future High Line, they would show people Sternfeld's photos instead, as “people could read different things into them” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 32). It was better to spark people's imagination than to fill it out for them.

The High Line now had cache and brought excitement. It was not a relic but an opportunity – a thing to be discovered. And, as such, it was a new cause célèbre in the making. Here, the star-studded social politics and wealth of New York became an important factor. Diane von Furstenberg, wife of media tycoon Barry Diller (whose company occupies the High Line-adjacent Gehry Building), has for many years prior to the redevelopment of High Line had large loft overlooking the viaduct and was an early and major benefactor of the project. The actor Edward Norton, whose father was a key author of the Rails-to-Trails legislation that would play a policy role in the conversion of the High Line to a park, was an early supporter and spokesman. He showed megastar Brad Pitt the project, helping him shimmy under a gate on the then-closed structure for an unsanctioned tour. Actor Kevin Bacon, his father a famous planner, also joined the effort, and a picture of him with Edward Norton at the opening of the first phase often comes up in online searches for the High Line. The High Line became a cause célèbre at a most fortuitous time for an expensive, high-design project; while most of New York City's public

spaces suffered a lean period of “austerity urbanism” (Peck, 2012), sexier, more visible, and centrally located projects benefited from an elite class that was awash in private riches from a Wall Street boom.

FHL began throwing more fundraisers, networking deep into to the wealthy elites of New York. Celebrities added to the buzz necessary to make fundraisers work. A December 2000 fundraiser at an art gallery made the *New York Post* because celebrities Kevin Bacon and Kyra Sedgwick attended. The *Post* article attributed the “celeb push” for convincing the delivery company FedEx to pull out of a plan for a distribution center in West Chelsea that required the vacating of the High Line easement (Weiss, 2000). Although FedEx realized that FHL had gained enough traction to at least slow the process of demolishing the High Line, property owners did not give up. Developers and the CPO were far from done with trying to get the High Line removed, and its fate was far from sealed, but yet again the obduracy of the High Line was reinforced by the attention it was receiving. Celebrity became a part of the High Line’s new imaginary.

For their next step in sparking the High Line’s campaign, FHL organized a design competition in January 2003 for ideas on how to redevelop the structure (Friends of the High Line, 2003). This step helped build upon the growing enthusiasm for the project. The competition was open to anyone who wanted to participate and was not about practicality – ideas did not have to be “realistic, or fundable, or buildable” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 53). They received an impressive 720 entries from 36 countries. Designs were fanciful and included everything from dragons to roller coasters. One top-rated design envisioned the High Line as a linear pool. That entry included a nude male figure, copied from a David Hockney painting, in the pool – an allusion to the then long standing gay community of the area. Like the initial

designs for the High Line approximately 100 years earlier, the competition's top designs were displayed to throngs of visitors and passersby in the main hall of Grand Central Terminal. Some of FHL's advisors had warned against such a fanciful competition because it would make the project seem unrealistic and unserious. But Hammond realized that the competition "would free up people to think about High Line in different ways" (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 53). The public's imagination was, in fact, further piqued, and because of many New York papers' national and international reach, it increasingly intrigued people outside of New York. As co-founder Hammond put it: "The weird thing is that the High Line is just a structure, it's just metal in the air, but it becomes a site for everybody's fantasies and projections" (Gopnik, 2001, p. 47).

Politics, Policy, and the Realities of Neoliberal Development

This chapter's focus is on ideas and discourse, which are arguably the most mobile and most important mobilized parts of the High Line, but it is also worth paying attention to policy and political economy. While they were highly local in many ways, they also reflected far wider patterns of neoliberal redevelopment and policy practice. Our discussion of the High Line's new imaginary skipped over many of the key steps in the process of its securing reuse. The purpose of framing it this way is to emphasize what is often overlooked in a political economy approach to analysis, what Rodgers calls "the agenda setting role of ideas" (1998, p. 6). The High Line did not simply emerge, reformed, because the powerful, well-funded actors from the private sector lined up behind it. There were powerful political actors for and against the High Line, as well as little question that tearing it down for new real estate development would have met the needs of economic interests. The agenda-setting role of ideas about the future of the High Line enabled the politics and economics of alternatives to physical demolition to come to the fore.

The degree to which most minds were made up regarding the future of the High Line at the time should not be discounted. For example, early on Hammond and David reached out to local City Councilmember Christine Quinn, whose 3rd District covered the High Line, with an informational packet. She responded that she “loved” the High Line but also told them, “I have a file in my district office labeled ‘Good Ideas That Will Never Happen.’ That’s where we put your stuff” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 15). But as more people became exposed to and excited by the idea of reuse through the crafting of a new imaginary, the future of the High Line opened up. FHL began to garner the support of various influential organizations like the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the Project for Public Places, and the Design Trust for Public Space. With growing support and an ever-increasing ability to raise funds, the FHL submitted a proposal to the Design Trust for Public Space for undertaking a study on the reuse of the High Line. The Design Trust, a comparatively unique and well-funded local organization dedicated to the design of public space in New York, accepted. While the study was underway, the FHL continued to make considerable political headway.

Following the publication of Adam Gopnik’s well-received article, “A Walk on the High Line,” published in the *New Yorker* and featuring Sternfeld’s photographs, op-eds in local and regional publications that supported saving and reusing the High Line began to appear. The quickening public interest gave the High Line’s redevelopment political legs. The City Council passed a resolution supporting the reuse of the High Line, and testimony was given by a host of powerful political actors, from then U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton to various local design professionals and nonprofit organization representatives (David et al., 2002, p. 54). While Mayor Giuliani’s administration was still working with the CPO on demolition efforts, his second and final term (per the pre-Bloomberg term limit of two terms) was wrapping up at the end of 2001.

All of the major candidates for Mayor, recognizing the growing popularity of the High Line idea, endorsed the project (David et al., 2002, p. 55). Most notably, the eventual winner, Michael Bloomberg, had become a big supporter.

FHL purposely attended public events with mayoral candidates to ask questions about their support for the High Line. At a breakfast event with Bloomberg, David asked about his support for the High Line and, to the Friends' surprise, he answered: "Yes, it's a no-brainer" (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 38). FHL connected with one of Bloomberg's aides, and the High Line became a major component of Bloomberg's parks and public space platform. Later, Bloomberg would use it as chit in his ambitious plans for the development of the West Side.

Interest in the High Line was growing rapidly, but 9/11 slowed its momentum. FHL used this as an opportunity to insert a new theme that accentuated not just reclaiming the past, but also building the future. In FHL's first post-9/11 newsletter, they tried to communicate that the High Line was still important, and that "we were committed to the future of New York City, this was future-oriented project" (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 39). Hammond believed that the High Line "was something they could work on, something that wasn't so weighted with emotion" (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 40). Here a central theme begins to be cast: the High Line as a symbol of a future-oriented city.

On another front in the battle to save the High Line, FHL helped file a lawsuit to stop the Giuliani Administration from going through with a last-minute demolition order. The High Line's obduracy had a lot to do with Federal rail-banking and rails-to-trails policy. The High Line existed in a kind of limbo, with a conditional abandonment order from the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) in which the liability for demolition was limited to \$7 million – a fraction of what the cost of demolition was expected to cost. Authority for this issue was now

under the Surface Transportation Board (STB), which was established in 1996 and took on the responsibilities ICC after it was disbanded. Because the High Line existed in this perpetual limbo, saving, and reusing it would require officially rail-banking it with a Certificate of Interim Use (CITU) by the STB. It so happened that Hammond and David's efforts coincided with efforts by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, a nonprofit that promotes rails-to-trail uses, to turn their attention to more urban projects. Traditional rails-to-trail has focused on rural and suburban rail right-of-ways that gave access to the countryside, primarily for biking. But these were also typically less valuable lands, and the stakes for a rail corridor in Manhattan were much higher. Although backers of the High Line won a temporary restraining order, it was later vacated. For a short period before the Bloomberg Administration took over, city could have forced immediate demolition.

Michael Bloomberg winning the mayoral race proved to be a boon to the High Line, and FHL had carefully cultivated a relationship with him. The study FHL prepared with the Design Trust was nearing completion, and they offered oncoming Mayor Bloomberg the opportunity to write the Foreword. The completed study was published in 2002 and titled *Reclaiming the High Line*. Bound and attractively presented, it makes a case that builds off of some of the key recommendations of the RPA report, as well as employing Peter Obletz's core arguments: the High Line is a unique opportunity for open space and offers a way to preserve a transportation right of way that would be very difficult to replace; it would provide the public an important benefit if kept for open space and potential future transportation use; it would provide a unique linear, grade-separated, elevated pedestrian experience; and it would strengthen economic development of the area by enhancing the attractiveness and value of properties around it by providing open space. The report includes background on the High Line and evaluation of its

potential and needs for reuse as a public space. The theme of “reclaiming,” as highlighted by the reports title, was very much on purpose. Reclaiming the High Line was a key concept for FHL’s leadership and was meant to advance the notion that a resource that was in part funded by the public (as it was, originally, by publicly backed bonds) should be regained by the public. This made FHL the protector of the public interest against CPO, which had been winning the battle of ideas with the assertion that removing the High Line was most aligned with public interest.

Mayor Bloomberg’s Foreword is particularly important in how it identifies the key themes of argument in favor of the High Line that have persisted. It appeals to the need for more public park space in New York that will “provide aesthetic relief, enhance our health, add to our enjoyment, and increase our property values” (David et al., 2002, p. 4). These four things will be seen to be central themes of praise for the High Line as a park and a public space. Bloomberg also hit the themes of precedent and interurban competition, similar to how Berlin and Paris were invoked in relation to the planning the High Line in New York in the early 1900s: “We know it can work. The City of Paris paved the way for this concept when it converted a similar viaduct into an elevated park ten years ago. . . . New York’s leading architects have recognized the opportunities the [High Line] viaduct offers as a catalyst for urban planning of the highest caliber” (David et al., 2002, p. 4). In addition to an appeal to precedent in a major world center of urbanism, Bloomberg was also making an appeal to authority. But rather than referring to the expert knowledge of the real estate development community that was invoked by the CPO, he calls upon the authority of “leading architects.” This highlights a shift in power and rationality over who has the correct vision for the High Line’s future. That Bloomberg specifically points out that architects, not planners, recognized what would be “catalyst for urban planning of the

highest caliber,” which foretells how the role of planners is often backgrounded in the story of the High Line.

Bloomberg’s Foreword was also marked a political power shift. The CPO did not just lose its main political supporter with the end of the Giuliani Administration; it would slowly lose the rhetorical position that it was advocating for the public interest. *Reclaiming the High Line*’s detailed case for the High Line, introduced by the new Mayor of New York, was another victory in the battle of ideas for FHL. The Foreword presciently concludes, “New York can be the model of how to do it right” (David et al., 2002, p. 4). In a matter of less than eight years, the High Line would act as the precedent and global benchmark for other urban linear parks.

FHL had also cultivated a strong relationship with Mayor Bloomberg’s new Planning Commissioner Amanda Burden, as well as Bloomberg-aligned new City Council Speaker Gifford Miller, who was a college friend of Hammond’s (Barlow Rodger, 2010, p. 6). Both Burden and Miller became powerful advocates for FHL and the reuse of the High Line. Burden, who came from a planning background and not a real estate one (although this is not meant to imply she was unfriendly to real estate interests), thought of the High Line as a “magical space” and was a particularly fierce advocate, later telling a reporter for the Times in 2004, “I always said that if I ever got into a position of power this would be my highest priority. And now I am” (Dyckhoff, 2004, p. 16). This was a remarkable shift from the views on the High Line of previous Planning Commissioner Rose.

But the growing favor of the public and even key political and planning actors was not enough to ensure the project’s viability. The High Line project still had to conform to a neoliberal political economy and justify itself as a property development and tax revenue generation tool, not just a public good and amenity. Gifford and Burden arranged a meeting for

FHL with Dan Doctoroff, the new Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and one of Bloomberg's closest aides. The FHL team presented the High Line from a "planning perspective" while also using Sternfeld's now reliable photographs for "emotion power" (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 45). But Doctoroff was uninterested in those arguments and appeals, and told them, "Don't show me pretty pictures. We have so many parks already that we can't afford. . . You're not telling me about the money. I need to know what this means financially" (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 45). Doctoroff, in a clear example of the meaning of neoliberal urban governance, cared none for the welfarist side of the High Line's reuse. The FHL needed an economic feasibility study to prove the project's worth.

After the FHL emerged from the meeting somewhat bruised, one of their key political advisors connected them with John Alschuler, Chairman of HR&A Advisors. HR&A is a Manhattan-based real estate and economic development consulting firm with a significant track record of major projects. At their first meeting, Alschuler laid out the logic of pitching the economic rationale of reusing the High Line as a park: "parks increase the value of nearby real estate, which leads to higher property taxes, and thus the addition of a new park on the High Line could create economic benefit for New York City" (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 45). HR&A took on FHL as a client and Alschuler himself took an especially active interest in the High Line, later serving as President of the Board for FHL. Thanks to his connections, Alschuler knew how to make the report appeal to the Bloomberg Administration and, in particular, Doctoroff. Not only did the High Line need to pay for itself and increase revenues for the City, it needed to support Bloomberg's plans for the West Side: upzoning the West Side for increased density, a new Jet's stadium for Hudson Yards and as a potential site of the Olympics, and an expansion of the Javits Convention Center. Bloomberg's intense focus on this area was not only because he

saw opportunity in the relatively less developed (for Manhattan) area, but it was also the result of a political deal with New York Governor George Pataki. Bloomberg received support and autonomy for his plans on the West Side in return for the Governor receiving support and autonomy to deal with the nationally prestigious 9/11 terrorism site redevelopment in lower Manhattan (Mollenkopf, 2005).

The final report from HR&A Advisors, “The High Line: The Feasibility of and Economic Impact of Re-Use,” was completed in 2002 and, though it was focused on economic impacts, it included legal analysis of rail-banking and management, acquisition of the structure, and management issues, with help from the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (Rails-to-Trials Conservancy, 2011). Strategically, it focused on the High Line from Gansevoort Street to the southern end of Hudson Yards and was more circumspect about the future of the section curving around the Hudson Yards, so as not to raise any flags that it might interfere with Bloomberg’s plans for that site. Still, HR&A hired engineers to develop strategies in the report for how High Line could be rerouted around Hudson Yards, but keep its connection to the national rail network. In order to legally rail-bank a spur for future rail use, it had to remain connected to a viable rail network in some way (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 47).

The most important part of the report, however, was its argument for the High Line’s economic feasibility – that investment in its reuse made financial sense for the City of New York. The estimated cost for the two phases was \$65 million (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 46). The report provided two scenarios – one with upzoning and the other with no changes to zoning – both predicated on the catalytic potential of the High Line to raise property values and spark new development (GmbH, 2015, p. 125). Under these scenarios, the range of increase in real estate taxes alone to the City was conservatively \$3.8-\$12.3 million dollars. With a midpoint of

\$8 million per year in in real estate tax increases alone, the estimated return to the City would be \$140 million dollars over 20 years. There was a solid business case for the High Line.

This businesslike approach toward the High Line is representative of what Julian Brash has called “The Bloomberg Way”: an “ostensibly pragmatic and apolitical corporate approach that Bloomberg touted in 2001 [campaigning] has merged as a new model for urban governance” around the globe (2011, p. 2). In reality, it was “deeply ideological” and “deeply political” (Brash, 2011, p. 3), a manifestation of contemporary neoliberalism. Building upon larger trends of entrepreneurial governance and neoliberalism that had already taken root in New York City, Bloomberg added his own twist to produce a place-specific neoliberal governance. The “Bloomberg Way” was a product of context, and place-specific path dependencies, which Brenner called “actually existing neoliberalism” (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). Notably, this place-specific neoliberalism became a world model of governance to be picked up by cities around the world. The High Line was, therefore, closely tied to this process and the eventual exporting of the Bloomberg Way.

The production High Line was not only a product of the neoliberal governance model, but it reflected it as well. Ushering the High Line through that political and policy process required money – lots of private money. The founders of FHL recognized that “A pattern was establishing itself. The brochure, the legal fees, and now this [economic feasibility] study all took money that we didn’t have. . . .If we can’t raise the money for this, we’ll never raise enough money to build the High Line” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 45). While Victor Hugo’s aphorism that “no army can stop an idea whose time has come” still rings true, it turned out that, just like a real army, someone had to raise funds to do battle.

FHL's remarkable ability to raise money cannot be dismissed as a critical factor in the production of the High Line. Not discounting the savvy of Hammond, David, and others on the growing FHL team, the High Line had garnered specific advantages. First, New York's "old money" establishment provided an enviable pool of philanthropy not common to most cities. FHL tapped into a robust network of local foundations for grants. Added to that were the swelling coffers of the Wall Street elite, who could shower funds upon pet projects around Manhattan. This enabled lavish fundraising events at restaurants, art galleries, and wealthy donors' homes. Celebrities played a role in this process as well, bringing not only money but star power and glamor to the fundraising.

Second, the High Line's ostensibly *public* purpose gave it an important and noble air. As Bloomberg's Foreword to the initial High Line study emphasized, the interest in greenspace in cities was resurgent. Witold Rybczynski argues that "[o]ne of the most encouraging trends of the last two decades has been the resurgence of urban parks, led by the restoration of revival of New York City's Central Park in the 1980s (thanks to the efforts of a privately funded conservancy)" (2009, p. 102). Irrespective of this resurgence, parks have continuously been a central part of modern urbanism, and their development was always undergirded by economic and social aims. Through reviewing the modern parks and open space movement, Cranz and Boland (2004) identified five modern park typologies, each possessing a specific social and economic target. Each of these typologies was dominant in a particular period, though elements of all can bleed through the eras. The current dominant typology that Cranz and Boland identified is the Sustainable Park, starting around 1990 and continuing today. The focuses of the Sustainable Park include health, ecology, passive and active recreation, native plants, corridors, permeable surfaces, green infrastructure, and more. This broad description matches much of what the High

Line's promoters emphasized – the timing of the project and its appeal to this contemporary idea of the kinds of parks that cities *should* have was impeccably timed. Not only was the High Line a perfect fit for the current trend of thinking about parks, the underlying public benefit conveyed by a park was a counterweight to the focus on economic benefits; it became a charitable cause for public benefit and reform. This duality – an economic rationale and one of a public benefit – was not unique, but it is a key part of understanding the FHL's ability to pass private and public muster in an era of neoliberal governance.

A third factor that allowed the High Line to raise funds is that it was located in a key space for real estate development. With the real estate values in New York spiraling upwards to new heights, the West Side was again a location of interest for a wider range of real estate interests. To those developers and other real estate actors who had not speculated on easements under the High Line, or who had otherwise been committed to the fight for its removal, the reuse of the High Line as a park to increase economic development was very plausible. A new cadre of developers and related real estate interests, seeing an opportunity, began to join FHL's cause. Here we see a notable split in the ranks of real estate and political coalitions after electoral change. One faction, largely led by the CPO, had invested, literally and figuratively, in particular vision of the redevelopment of the neighborhood without the High Line. A new faction saw greater opportunity in a different vision for the neighborhood with the redeveloped High Line and was not bound by investments or plans predicated on its removal. To counter this split, the CPO funded their own study, arguing for potentially greater economic benefits from tearing down the High Line and building on its easements (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 49). This is, on its face, a plausible assertion, particularly since it would cost less to demolish the High Line than reuse it, and there would be no ongoing maintenance costs to the public. But, with the High Line as a

potential tool for pushing upzoning and the resulting significant increase in buildable area it would create, the lure of grander economic opportunities eclipsed the CPO's economic argument.

The FHL's fundraising success snowballed. Edward Norton agreed to chair a fundraiser. Martha Stewart offered to host as well. FHL founders David and Hammond were still not being paid, but increased funds allowed them to hire Juliet Page, the organization's first full-time paid staff member and a specialist in fundraising. Shortly before that, in March of 2002, a court found that the City of New York could not legally issue a demolition order. While it was unlikely that the Bloomberg Administration would have exercised it, this was another milestone for FHL and a setback for the CPO. Even so, the FHL still faced a challenge: "Our project needed both the community and Dan to be happy, but this was not going to be easy" (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 53).

Despite the rhetoric about parks, the realpolitik was that the High Line had to meet certain economic concerns and be useful in the Bloomberg Administration's bigger goals for the West Side. The Bloomberg Administration saw West Chelsea as an underutilized area ripe for growth and a cornerstone of the Bloomberg Administration's vision of the West Side. A denser, more valuable area around the High Line would complement their plans for a megaproject at Hudson Yards. Just like the Giuliani Administration before them, but with more ambition, the Bloomberg Administration wanted to upzone, increasing the allowable height and/or density of new development in West Chelsea. Rezoning was a central planning activity of the Bloomberg Administration over the course of its three terms. Approximately one third of New York City's zoning was changed (Armstrong, Been, Madar, & McDonnell, 2010). Though not all rezoning was upzoning, the result was a significant increase in buildable area citywide. Despite this, the

neighborhood residents and Community Board leadership were deeply skeptical about the Bloomberg Administration's plans for the upzoning of West Chelsea, and its plans for a stadium at Hudson Yards. The neighborhood had fought high rise development fiercely since 1989, and Community Board 4 had recently passed a plan to downzone most of the area (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 21). The FHL angered many residents by siding with the Bloomberg Administration, but at this point, buy-in at higher levels of politics and power were already on board.

The Bloomberg Administration moved forward with the public planning process for rezoning in the fall of 2002. In 2005, the City Council approved the "West Chelsea Special District" with stated goals to: 1) "Encourage and guide the development of West Chelsea as a dynamic mixed use neighborhood"; 2) "Encourage the development of residential uses along appropriate avenues and streets"; 3) "Encourage and support the growth of arts-related uses"; 4) "Facilitate the restoration and reuse of the High Line elevated rail line as an accessible, public open space"; 4) "Ensure that the form of new buildings relates to and enhances neighborhood character and the High Line open space"; 5) "Create and provide a transition to the lower-scale Chelsea Historic District to the east and the higher-density Hudson Yards area to the north" (New York City Department of City Planning, 2013, p. 3). Strongly influenced by Burden, the rezoning specifically limited conversion of properties midblock, where most art gallery spaces were, to reduce the loss of those spaces to new construction. The Special District rezoning also included some bonus floor area ratio (FAR) incentives for affordable housing production.

The environmental impact statement for the Special District rezoning estimated that that it would produce an additional 657 units of affordable housing, 4,051 market rate dwelling units, 195,215 sq. ft. of retail space, and 198,726 sq. ft. of museum space (New York City Department

of City Planning, 2004, pp. 2–2). Likewise, it expected significant decreases in space used for storage/manufacturing, parking/auto related uses, and vacant land. Surprisingly, it also expected a net decrease of 796,947 sq. ft. of office space and 131,100 sq. ft. of hotel space. But the development community had already targeted the area for residential expansion, so this does not appear to have been a point of contention. It was a major increase in real estate development opportunities in the area, and the High Line was seen a central catalyst that would drive ambitious neighborhood redevelopment under the new zoning.

Still, this did little to allay the strongly opposed CPO and, more importantly, those speculators with property under the High Line’s easements that were counting on demolition. At this point, politics were on the side of the FHL and the reuse of the High Line. But property owners under the easements were still powerful and could gum up the High Line in court, forestalling the goals of the Bloomberg Administration. The Administration cooked up a smart, if somewhat questionable, solution: transferable development rights (TDR). TDR are a market-based tool for governments to influence development patterns:

They allow density to be transferred from one property to another, with the property on which the transferred rights are used being more densely developed than is permitted under baseline zoning rules, and the property from which the right are sold covered by a development restriction or conservation easement. (McConnell & Walls, 2009, p. 288)

The Bloomberg Administration created the “High Line Transfer Corridor,” which designated an approximately 100-foot zone around the length of the High Line, from West 18th Street to West 30th Street, where included property owners could transfer unused FAR to projects in the Special West Chelsea District. There was a very practical side to this program. It was linked to some controls on the height of new construction abutting the High Line, mostly the East Side, with the

important aim of preserving light and air around the proposed park. It also required some of the abutting properties to build or dedicate areas for access points and other High Line park development needs, like elevators and stairs, in return for granting properties TDRs. Vacant lot owners, primarily those under the easement, could even get bonus TDR by making a cash contribution of \$50 per square foot to the High Line Improvement Fund (Been & Infranca, 2013, p. 450).

The TDR program was controversial in that it obscured just how dense the upzoning in the Special West Chelsea District allowed, as the FAR from the TDR could be added on top of the increased allowable zoning. Furthermore, the inclusion of the properties covered by High Line easements was political and not, as most TDR would be, compensating owners for something being taken away by government action. The easements were still legally in effect, and land holders had been compensated at the time of the original construction of the High Line. As Hammond noted about working with the Bloomberg Administration on the rezoning effort, “[t]he hope was that if we could find another way for them to monetize their unused rights, their opposition to the High Line would go away” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 64). As the easements were in force and the High Line was eligible for (and eventually was given) interim trail use that preserved those easements for park use, the owners had no legal claim to the development rights. As a political tool, it was largely successful – most owners took the deal. Still, some property owners under the easements held out for additional compensation, suing the City for allegedly taking their property unlawfully and eventually losing in court.

The political and legal turns of the High Line’s reuse continued, including the overturning of the court decision that forbid the City’s demolition order in 2004. But the City was already deeply on board, and no one feared that it would execute that power. The next key

steps were about structuring the project, fundraising, and design/construction. FHL and the City of New York started the design selection process in March of 2004, described further in the next section. It was an informal sign that the project was a go. The milestones before construction were more procedural. The STB agreed to issue a Certificate of Interim Trail Use in June of 2005, and CSX agreed to donate the High Line to the City the following November. Rail-banking, what Hammond and David had realized as one of the major milestones of preserving the High Line, was set. The City began to allocate funds as well as apply for Federal and State grants. But not only was more money needed to build the park, but the question also arose as to who would manage the park and pay for its unusually high ongoing expenses.

A park built in the air with unusual infrastructure and maintenance requirements was sure to be an additional burden on an already underfunded park system. The Bloomberg Administration, as its famously neoliberal politics would imply, was eager for a public-private partnership that would take most of the responsibility out of government management. But the founders of FHL were wary about the commitment to fundraise and manage the park long term. They had considered models like the much touted Central Park Conservancy, which had taken over the fundraising and management of Central Park as well as the Bryant Park, and were not ideologically opposed to private management of the park, but it was not a role that they had envisioned taking on (David & Hammond, 2011, pp. 70–71). What pushed FHL to agree to become the manager of the High Line, despite its founder's reticence, turned out to be as much about the power and politics of funding as neoliberal ideology: some big donors had come to trust FHL and insisted that they would only keep giving much needed money to the project with them in the lead (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 71). While the power of donors comes as no surprise, it stresses the earlier point that the High Line's reuse was highly influenced by the

power and importance of big money, Manhattan social politics. The superiority of *private* management was an ideological given to the financial backers of the High Line, and having a private manager ready was, in many ways, the last piece of the puzzle to make the project a go. Having aligned the public discourse and imagination with politics and capital (real estate, governmental, and philanthropic), the High Line was ready for design and construction (and more fundraising).

Rebuilding the High Line

Though economic returns lead the way, design was not an afterthought. Aesthetics were key to the High Line's allure for the public and for big donors. According to Burden, it also mattered to the Bloomberg Administration: "This is a real-estate driven city, and developers are always looking for the bottom line. But then the mayor [Bloomberg] has always insisted that architecture is a great economic developer" (Dyckhoff, 2004). Starting in March of 2004, FHL lead the process of selecting a design team for the High Line. From their own experiences, as well as thoughts about the public's responses to the High Line, Hammond and David had developed some core ideas about its design. They realized that capturing the sense of discovery of a wild place where nature had retaken the city was most alluring, as a "kind of cult had developed around the existing landscape" (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 73). Likewise, Hammond says their "goal became to make what felt like a very private and privileged experience – almost like entering a magical world combining wildscape and incredible urban vistas – available to others without destroying that feeling" (Barlow Rodger, 2010, p. 3). Even though the Promenade Plantée in Paris was the closest built approximation to their vision for the High Line, the Plantée's landscape design was too formal and traditional for their purposes (Barlow Rodger, 2010, p. 3). They wanted something markedly different.

FHL solicited proposals from design teams and received 52 entries. A panel that included representatives from FHL and the City chose four finalists for detailed interviews: heavyweights in architecture and landscape architecture. Steven Holl, notable as the creator of the Bridge of Houses design concept in the early 1980s, was among them. Smartly feeding the public's appetite for more images and stoking the excitement over the project, FHL convinced the *New York Times* to run an article with teasers from each team (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 76). The article ran in early July of 2004: a full page in the Arts Sections that described the designs of the four teams, with images and quotes from Hammond. Still pitching the idea to the public, "The park of the future will be built on industrial sites like this one . . . And we want to show that a park doesn't have to be Central Park to succeed. It can be a thin linear space cutting next to buildings" (Iovine, 2004, p. AR29). The following August, FHL, jointly with the Bloomberg Administration, chose a team composed of James Corner Field Operations, Diller Scofidio + Renfro (DS+R), and Piet Oudolf.

Corner and his studio, Field Operations, was a landscape architect who, at the time, had won but not yet completed his only major commission: the prestigious designing of Fresh Kills Park on Staten Island. He was familiar with the High Line from being a student in Steven Holl's architecture studio at Columbia University (GmbH, 2015, p. 13). DS+R was a Manhattan architecture firm, known at the time for their art exhibits and small projects, but had won no major commissions. Ricardo Scofidio, one of the principals of DS+R, also originally knew of the High Line through Holl's work, and used it as a teaching tool in his architecture studios at Cooper Union (GmbH, 2015, p. 13). Piet Oudolf was a well-established Dutch garden designer known for his naturalistic approach. While there were concerns about the team's limited track record of built projects, Scofidio won their allegiance by in part describing his goal as "to save

the High Line from architecture” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 77). Ironically, the High Line would later become an icon of modern landscape architecture.

Keeping the public’s imagination and excitement piqued, FHL convinced the curator of architecture and design at the prestigious Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) to exhibit the winning design proposal (Barlow Rodger, 2010, p. 6). The exhibit, which opened in April of 2005, was scheduled for a three-month run, but it was so popular that it was extended for an additional three months. The main funders of the exhibit were IAC/InterActiveCorp, Barry Diller’s corporation, and the New York State Council on the Arts. Both of these private actors (who were also early funders of FHL) and the State recognized the High Line as a form of art. But it was not only about art. Support was also provided by London Terrace, an apartment complex near the High Line, and Handel Architects, the architecture firm for the Related Company’s Caledonia property that would build the first luxury apartment building along the High Line. This is another sign of how a growing faction of real estate capital recognized the High Line’s potential as a real estate catalyst, and actively helped push the project as a result. The exhibition brochure declared that “[i]n jeopardy as recently as December 2002 of being demolished, the Line was slated for preservation and re-use in March 2004” (Di Carlo & Museum of Modern Art (New York, 2005). This heralded the start of the design process as the milestone of saving the High Line, not STB’s order for rail-banking. Hammond saw this exhibit as a turning point in which “people’s expectations changed and things really started to move forward” (Barlow Rodger, 2010, p. 6). It had become a given that the High Line would be reused, as the pro-reuse discourse and its political and financial capital alignment had won resoundingly.

Designers on board, the most important hurdle for the High Line project, other than STB approval, remained – money. The City of New York had agreed to cover some of the cost, but other public and private sources were expected to fund a significant portion. And, with a high-end design team and increased desire by those involved to make this a marquee project, cost estimates quickly rose above the initial \$65 million. Bloomberg’s plans for a stadium at Hudson Yards had been blocked by community and State level political pushback (Brash, 2011, p. 193), and his planned signature achievement in redeveloping Hudson Yards looked to be in jeopardy. Bloomberg turned his attention and City resources to making the High Line a signature achievement of his administration. The City of New York agreed to increase their contribution to \$61 million, but the ballooning \$140 million cost for the first two sections resulted in a significant shortfall. Federal and State grants were targeted to fill part of the gap, and FHL created a campaign to raise \$50 million in private funds for construction of the High Line (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 81). This ambitious campaign proved successful, though the full target was not met. While donations ranged in individual amounts, the High Line was buoyed by many a Manhattan-sized donation, many of which are memorialized by donor plaques along the High Line today.

The groundbreaking celebration for the first phase of the High Line happened on April 9 of 2006. It was a star-studded affair with high-ranking politicians, wealthy funders, and A-list celebrities. Diane von Furstenberg and her husband Barry Diller, early supporters of the High Line, gave a \$5 million donation at the event. Senator Schumer told attendees that “[b]reaking ground on the High Line will kick-start West Side development and break the culture of inertia that has plagued the area” (City of New York, 2006). Others praised the community involvement and public nature of the park as a gift to New Yorkers, lauded the public-private partnership,

and, making no mention of Paris or anywhere else, proclaimed the uniqueness of the project. In rather telling statement Barry Diller, along with wife Diane von Furstenberg being among its top private donors, said: “There are very few activities as fulfilling as enriching the life of a great city. . . The transformation of the High Line into a park that future generations will forever enjoy is a joyful prospect for our family. We hope this gift will stimulate other who care about New York, especially this High Line District, where we are not both involved in building projects for ourselves and companies” (City of New York, 2006).

The first two phases of the High Line cost \$152.3 million when completed. This is significantly more than was estimated and reflects the growing ambition of the High Line as a project. Once a kind of growth coalition was fully on board, it encouraged a shift to an ever more complex design. The High Line started with simple ambitions but morphed into an intentional showpiece. And after Bloomberg’s plans for a stadium at the rail yards failed to come together, the third leg supporting the High Line project was brought back to the table. Including the third phase, the total cost for the project was \$187.3 million dollars, with \$123.2 million from the City of New York, \$20.3 million from Federal government sources, \$400 thousand from the State of New York, and approximately \$44 million from FHL (“The High Line,” 2014). The Federal funds were, notably, largely transportation focused, their focus ostensibly to promote and improve walkability. In the end, FHL did not meet its lofty fundraising goal, but it did manage to raise a substantial sum of private funds. While the public paid for the bulk of the much-more-expensive-than-anticipated project, the role of private money in the production of the High Line – both for enabling it to enter the political discourse and for its construction (and after, for its rather expensive operation) – is important to the specific story of the production of the High Line.

While far from exhaustive, this overview both connects historical parallels and sets up a baseline for understanding the connection between the original artifact and the High Line phenomenon that travels. The High Line was produced largely as a response to a specific history, opportunity, context, and capacity. As one observer in the *Wall Street Journal* said:

[T]he same issues of dereliction, prohibitive cost, initial real-estate opposition and community doubts that plagued Central Park in the 1850s also played out here [with the High Line] – and were resolved with the same combination of private initiative, mayoral support, creative legislation, brilliant design and a willingness to risk the unpredictable that underlies all models of great urban development. (Iovine, 2009)

Some critics of the High Line may disagree with the laudatory language, but the parallels are largely true. The notion of response was crucial. Even though precedents, like the Promenade Plantée, existed, the High Line was a solution to a unique problem – a remarkably obdurate structure in an area experiencing intensifying real estate interest and an owner with limited options to avoid demolition costs. Likewise, the specific politics, celebrity, and wealth of Manhattan also contributed greatly to the specific outcome. Or, as the former General Counsel for Conrail put it:

[T]he deal was consummated through sophisticated land use planning by the City along with the critical addition of a new Mayor, which allowed a number of diverse and seemingly irreconcilable interests to be harmonized. The public policy success was made possible by innovative political and public relations strategies by the community, and unusually significant financial contribution by private interest, and a community particularly well suited to a development like HLP [High Line Park]. (Broder, 2012, pp. 245–46)

In addition to these observations, the larger national and international context of contemporary thinking about urban parks and greening the city played a role in the fate of the High Line. A deeper analysis into the production of the High Line might foreground certain parts of the production of the High Line over others. But while some may in fact be more important than others, none of them should be overlooked. The High Line is the product of a particular place at a particular time and its production is not easily reduced to a few aspects. These factors not only play a role in the production of the High Line, but also help illuminate the connections to the mobilized High Line phenomenon.

Chapter IV **The High Line: A Real Place**

Excitement over its repurposing had been building in New York, with continued exhibitions of the evolving designs, star-studded fundraisers, and upbeat coverage in local news outlets. And since it was New York, local news outlets included some of the world's top news organizations, such as the New York Times and Wall Street Journal, that have national and international reach. From early on, the High Line was not just an object of local interest, but one of national and international fanfare and interest. While the High Line was becoming a New York phenomenon, it was simultaneously emerging as a phenomenon on the national and world stages, largely because of New York's long-standing place in a spotlight on both those stages.

This chapter will continue the account of the High Line as a real place and a project embedded in a specific socio-political and physical context, but it will also start to make the shift to studying the High Line as a New York phenomenon that has been recognized around the world. Using the term "phenomenon" here is quite literal: "[a] remarkable person thing or event" and, in philosophy, "[t]he object of a person's perception; what the sense or the mind notice" ("Oxford Dictionaries," n.d.). This is by no means a definitive account of the High Line and its relationship with its surroundings. The intention is to provide a relatively thick description of the High Line and its context as a real place – one very different from the flattened or simplified narrative that develops and travels in popular discourse and other outlets. It is meant to provide an informative contrast against the story of the High Line that was flattened and mobilized.

Opening Celebrations and Adulations

The first phase of the High Line opened on June 1, 2009. FHL had formally agreed to manage the park and take on its operations, which they expected would cost from \$2 to \$4 million a year to operate. At the opening, mega donor couple Diller and von Furstenberg announced a \$10 million gift to FHL (Pogrebin, 2009a, p. c2). This was followed by Lisa Falcone, another big donor and wife of a hedge fund billionaire, taking the microphone and surprising the crowd and FHL with a matching \$10 million (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 119). Mayor Bloomberg cut the ribbon, calling the High Line “an extraordinary gift to our city’s future” (Pogrebin, 2009b, p. C3). The press was also glowing about the project. *New York Times* architecture critic Nicolai Ouroussoff called it “an invaluable and transformative gift” (2009, p. C1). Julie Iovine, Executive Editor of the *Architect’s Newspaper* opined in the *Wall Street Journal* that “the city should seriously consider what went so right with this project and do it more often” (2009, p. D7).

The High Line quickly attracted huge crowds. Originally predicted by FHL and its consultants to attract 400,000 visitors a year, the High Line instead hit the 2 million visitor mark by April of 2010, less than a year after opening (Amateau, 2010). Because of its immediate success, FHL’s “primary worry” switched from whether the High Line would attract enough visitors to “that the new park might be loved to death” (Iovine, 2009). The High Line’s and FHL’s tales of success spread nationally and internationally, and the new park quickly became part of the tourist circuit in New York. As throngs of visitors from around the world packed the New York’s newest sensation, the two millionth visitor was not from New York City but, fittingly for what had become a tourist draw more than a local park, from Raleigh, North Carolina (Amateau, 2010).

The High Line's wild popularity, as well as the resulting and immediate boost of interest in real estate investment in the neighborhood, ensured that the second phase would go forward. The second phase, extending the park from Gansevoort St. to the southern end of Hudson Yards, was completed June 8th of 2011. Likewise, this section unleashed another wave of media praise, excitedly pointing out its new features while recounting the success of phase one. Just like FHL's strategic rollout of pictures and design teasers that built anticipation and excitement for the High Line, the project's multiple phases served to extend interest and excitement each time a new section opened. After two years of being open to the public, the High Line's popularity continued to grow. By the opening of the second phase, it had received 4 million visitors, half from outside of New York City, split between domestic and international visitors (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 125).

The third and final phase, the part that curves around the Hudson Yards, opened on September 21, 2014. Failing to secure a stadium for the site, the Bloomberg Administration focused on a major program to develop the yards and areas to the north into a major office and residential center. The main developer selected, The Related Companies, is also a major owner and developer of High Line-adjacent residential buildings. Again, the opening of this last phase sparked another round of media and fanfare. Michael Kimmelman, the *New York Times* Architecture Critic, heaped praise in his insightful review of the complete High Line and noted, "It's hard to believe now that some New Yorkers once thought renovating the decrepit elevated rail line was a lousy idea" (2014, p. C1).

Praise for the High Line has been heady and voluminous. Various media outlets have heralded it as an innovation, a masterpiece of design, a redevelopment catalyst, a new form of public space, and so much more. Trade Associations of all types, along with other organizations,

lauded the High Line and FHL, as well. In 2009, Hammond received the prestigious Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome. In 2010, David and Hammond received, from the Municipal Arts Society of New York, the Rockefeller Foundation's Jane Jacobs Medal for New Ideas and Activism. In October 2013, Joshua David and Robert Hammond were awarded the National Building Museum's Vincent Scully Prize to "recognize exemplary practice, scholarship, or criticism in architecture, historic preservation, and urban design" (National Building Museum, 2013). Overwhelmingly, the park is celebrated as a truly enjoyable physical experience, a major investment in public space, and a wildly successful catalyst for urban revitalization. As such, the High Line has also sparked the imagination of people around the world regarding potential reuse of obsolete infrastructure and reorganization of their urban fabric.

The Design and the Physical Experience of the High Line

Crowds aside, the experience of the High Line today is an undeniably satisfying one for most visitors. One must walk upstairs or take an elevator to enter it. On top of the structure, 20-30 feet above grade, one walks between buildings punctuated by open vistas, catching glimpses down avenues, sweeping views of the Hudson River, and a kind of voyeuristic peek into windows of the old and proliferating new buildings that line its sides. The alternating linear experience of spatial compression and release, of canyons and vistas, and of funky and glamorous is extraordinary. Though there are many possible precedents for linear urban parks, the High Line, unlike the classical Olmstedian tradition of urban parks as "a green escape from urban bustle," instead offers a new perspective on the city from just above the street (Rybczynski, 2011). It is not a respite from the city but a showcase of the city from different

angles, surprisingly radical in its juxtapositions (see Figure 1).



FIGURE 1: VIEW UP 10TH AVENUE FROM THE HIGH LINE. PHOTOGRAPHED BY THE AUTHOR IN 2014.

No bikes, skateboards or similar conveyances are allowed on the High Line, and one walks along at their speed of choice (when possible, that is, given the frequent crowds), never worrying about the intersections and potentially dangerous vehicles that one typically negotiates on a stroll through Manhattan, yet not feeling far from it. The sounds of the busy city, just a couple of stories or so below, seem to float around, yet are out of sight and out of mind except where the designers have intentionally show-cased them.

The designers, taking advantage of the unique vantage point of New York City being on top of the structure offered, accentuated the High Line with some features that pleasingly insert discrete places into a literal “place of flows.” Attractively designed “peel up” benches that rise

from the pavers line the walk and are inviting spots for people-watching. More so, mini-plazas, like the “Death Avenue’ Amphitheater” where a sunken deck with rows of benches faces a large glass window to give a view down 10th Avenue, frame the surroundings like a television show to “create a priceless ‘only in New York’ moment” (La Farge, 2012, p. 99).



FIGURE 2: THE "DEATH AVENUE AMPHITHEATER" LOOKING UP 10TH STREET. PHOTOGRAPHED BY THE AUTHOR IN 2014.

This notion of “only in New York” is key, as the context of New York City plays a central role in the High Line as an experience. The views down boulevards and the sweeping views of the Hudson River delight with iconic views of Manhattan and its surroundings. The tall buildings that line most of the way provide a dense urban canyon with layers of history and offer easy, voyeuristic-like glimpses into windows, allowing visitors to see some of the daily life

going on in the various buildings – sometimes too much for the occupants’ liking (Kurutz, 2014, p. D1).



FIGURE 3: NEAR THE "WILDFLOWER FIELD" BY THE 28TH STREET ENTRANCE TO THE HIGH LINE. PHOTO TAKEN BY AUTHOR IN 2014.

On one balcony of a tenement overlooking the High Line, the occupants purposefully staged a series of “Renegade Cabaret,” which was unsanctioned but embraced by FHL (P. Green, 2009). The Standard High Line, a large hotel which spans over a section of the High Line in the Meatpacking District, is known for the not infrequent “free skin show playing out in the massive windows” of the hotel rooms that High Line patrons can see from below (Sutherland, 2009).



FIGURE 4: THE STANDARD HOTEL STRADDLING THE HIGH LINE. PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR 2014.



FIGURE 5: HIGH LINE PASSING THROUGH THE CHELSEA MARKET. PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR IN 2014.

In addition to the sights, the physical urban context and its activities make up the “only in New York” aspect of the High Line. Manhattan has a busy, fast-paced street life. Its abundance of active street life means concerns about dampening the vibrancy of the street with an elevated, limited access park are more muted than they are in conventional, less dense cities, where elevated walkways tend to kill street life. Additionally, while Manhattan has some remarkable green oases like Central Park, it is not known for its copious park space. Carving out new green space among the valuable, dense real estate of Manhattan is a significant achievement that does not necessarily have the same value or impact in other contexts. As well, the space created is relatively uncommercial. Instead of Holl’s idea of small shops at intervals along the structure, and an RPA report’s suggestion of a commercial promenade, there is limited commerce on the High Line. There is a gift shop, a seasonal café, and food stalls clustered where the High Line passes under a building near the Chelsea Market. Refreshment stands are sprinkled in a few other spots as well. But it is noticeably uncommercial overall, which was FHL Co-Founder David’s strong desire from early on in the visioning process for the project (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 23).

While continuing many of the same aesthetic elements of the first two sections, the third section was designed to seem more “gritty” and simple, “giving visitors a glimpse of how the High Line looked before its makeover” (Kimmelman, 2014, p. C1). This was, in part, because of more limited construction funds, but it also has two important design functions. The first smartly plays off the coming construction of the mostly steel and glass Hudson Yards megaproject. Though the first two phases of the High Line are surrounded by many historic industrial buildings, tenements and housing complexes, new and shiny architecture increasingly fills the skyline in the spaces between buildings and replaces older structures. This shift makes the area

the hotbed for architectural experimentation in New York. Keeping a grittier look in the third phase relates to the history of the High Line and the rail yards, which will no longer be visible below and should provide juxtaposition against the soon-to-be-forest of shiny new Hudson Yards skyscrapers. Secondly, the very positive response to the third phase's grittier design after the first two phases' high design point to an ironic shift in sensibilities— as the area becomes developed, there seems to be an increased nostalgia for the wild, untamed High Line that so many have heard stories about.

Two key design themes are consistent throughout the High Line's play on the telescoping of the past into the future, and they deserve special mention. One is linearity – the shape of the High Line and the use of it to focus on the experience of being on a journey punctuated with vistas. As touched upon later, linearity is arguably the most important characteristic of the High Line. It directly embodies the notion of modern, expeditious movement through the city; the form and path that someone follows on the High Line is inextricably linked to notions of moving quickly and efficiently through and above the city. In fact, such notions undergird its Federal Transportation funding for construction.

Additionally, the vistas provided by the elevated, linear exploration of the city on the High Line merge modern and postmodern frames of the urban experience. The larger, sweeping vistas of the city provided by the High Line (though they are quickly being obscured by continued high-rise development in the surrounding area) plays to the modernist, totalizing, pan-optical impulse to see the city. As Brockelman describes in *The Frame and the Mirror: On collage and the Postmodern*, modernist views of the city included “the generally utopian demand for a visible totality and the specifically futurist fascination with rapid moment [that] reinforce[s] the imperative to shrink urban structure until only residual elements remain” (2001, p. 155). But

the High Line diffuses that full modernist experience by design. Designers purposely obscured long views down the High Line with landscape and winding paths to slow movement. Areas like the small lawn or sunken amphitheater punctuate the linearity with what Corner calls “episodes” (Goldberger, 2011). The vignettes that these episodes create – the vistas down the urban canyon of the High Line and the boulevards framed by buildings or, in one case, an empty billboard – represent a postmodern impulse to break the city up into discrete pieces. These framed vistas create what Brockelman describes, in the case of New York, as the “episodic metropolis” (Brockelman, 2001, p. 175).

The second key theme is the “found” beauty of the High Line. The core notion of recreating the wildscape was “found” with the rediscovery of the High Line. After years of disuse and minimal maintenance, the High Line had become overrun with grasses and small trees. Many were not necessarily “native” to New York and may have hitched a ride on rail cars. But they are hearty and climate-appropriate plantings that need little water, which makes the park more sustainable and is a much-touted feature. The key aspect is keeping the impression of this found landscape in its reuse. The entire base of the High Line had to be removed during construction, so none of the plants currently existing are original. But the planting designer, Oudolf, carefully chose the same or similar plants in order to echo the pre-reuse horticultural landscape of abandonment. This, along with sections of train track embedded in pavers, creates the consistent allusion in the High Line’s design to its wild, abandoned past as a frontier that had intrigued so many upon its rediscovery. In many ways the High Line, converted from its actual wild and abandoned glory to handle big crowds and functions, is a type of really good fake. Or, as Fu and Murray describe, “[T]ruly good ‘fakes’ improve on reality so much that they persuade consumer to actually prefer the copy to the original” (2014, p. 845). The extension of their

observation to the High Line made here is neither meant to criticize it for the paradox that to be open to more people it had to destroy what made it authentic and appealing in the first place, nor to discount the project's creativity in design. But it highlights how the High Line is actively engaged in connecting to a notion of an authentic past which has, in truth, been largely obliterated and remade for consumption.

The High Line's design has been wildly celebrated in the media, general discourse, and by professional organizations, and its design and designers have received numerous design awards. From 2010-12 alone, a partial list includes awards from the American Society of Landscape Architects, the American Institute of Architects, D&AD (a British art and design organization), Wallpaper Magazine, New York Landmarks Conservancy, New York Arts Commission, and the American Planning Association (and some have given multiple awards for different phases). Architecture critics and the general public have been equally, if not more, glowing. Media articles, from architectural critics to design blogs, drip with praise. Design is a highlight of the High Line, a central theme that plays into the park as more than green space; it is also a spectacle of design. As such, it has also become an early, if atypical, triumph for the Landscape Urbanism movement, of which James Corner, the lead landscape architect for the High Line, is considered a key leader. The movement, which can be hard to describe succinctly, is an approach to design in which "landscape has become a lens through which the contemporary city is represented and a medium through which it is constructed" (Waldheim, 2006, p. 15). In his chapter in the *Landscape Urbanism Reader*, which is preceded by a rendering of the High Line, Corner describes the movement as "the union of landscape with urbanism [that] promises new relational and systemic workings across territories of vast scale and scope, situating the parts in relation to the whole" (2006, p. 33). Put more clearly by Steiner:

The basic premise of landscape urbanism holds that landscape should be the fundamental building block for city design. In traditional urbanism, some structure—a wall, roads, or buildings—led development. Green spaces were relegated to left-over areas, unsuited for building, or were used for ornament. Through landscape urbanism, cultural and natural processes help the designer to organize urban form. (2011, p. 333)

It is an approach that claims to seek a balance between the natural landscape and the urban one, with an emphasis on making the urban environment more open, greener, more intertwined with the natural environment.

As a rather esoteric movement, Landscape Urbanism does not have a large place in the wider public discourse of the High Line. In fact, the term “Landscape Urbanism” is not found anywhere in the FHL’s High Line Press Kit – not even the “High Line Design Statement” section written by Corner (Friends of the High Line, n.d.). Among the design elite, however, being associated with the movement is a badge of sophistication and cutting-edge design. It adds to the mystique of the High Line as innovative, future oriented, design savvy, and ecologically oriented. For example, *ArchDaily*, a design-oriented publication, included the High Line in a list of “12 Projects that Explain Landscape Urbanism and How It’s Changing the Face of Cities” (Gintoff, 2016).

The well-received fanfare and glowing press have been a boon to the careers of the High Line’s designers, particularly DS+R and James Corner’s Field Operations. They have all seen a huge increase in commissions, and mentions of them in the press almost always introduce them as the designers of the High Line. Likewise, they have been outgoing in terms of publicizing the design of the High Line, speaking, publishing, and showcasing it at every turn. In 2015, Field Operations and DS+R, with help from other designers, published a thick coffee table book on the

design of the High Line (GmbH, 2015). Emphasizing the High Line's worthiness in the cannon of great design, the visually-oriented book "is the story of New York's park in the sky as experienced by those who designed it" (GmbH, 2015, p. 9).

High Line Context: The Neighborhoods

The above description of the physical experience and design of the High Line reflects the focus of accounts that telescope the big views and icons of Manhattan into the High Line experience. However, the specific, neighborhood-level context is important to bring into focus as well. Today, the repurposed High Line runs through two officially designated neighborhoods: The West Village and Chelsea. While the High Line runs the length of the Chelsea neighborhood, only three blocks run south into the West Village in a distinct area called the Meatpacking District. The High Line's 3rd section, through Hudson Yards, will likely be considered by many to be a third neighborhood, as the megaproject over the rail yards will be physically and aesthetically very different from the rest of Chelsea. It is still, however, technically part of Chelsea.

As described earlier, the areas around the High Line initially served a key center of warehousing and logistics. The improved rail infrastructure that the High Line provided was the catalyst for the conversion of bordering residential areas into industrial ones as commerce expanded, like in the case of St. John's Park. However, full conversion to an industrial area never happened – pockets of residential buildings held on, some new ones were sprinkled in, and residential development intensified just to the east of the High Line as Manhattan's growth expanded northward. Evidence of this can be seen in the remaining small tenement buildings that dot the area and the large apartment buildings that mark the meeting of the nearby industrial area with the residential area of Chelsea to the east. The area surrounding the High Line remained

“off the map” for many years after the last train ran down its tracks. It existed as a mix of industrial uses with meatpacking, auto repair, and warehousing slowly replaced by artists’ lofts and galleries. The area also had a strong gay presence and was home to a number of gay bars and dance clubs. With its long-standing industrial character and poor transportation links, the area had been a notable laggard in the rocketing Manhattan real estate market of the 90s and 00s.

West Village: The Meatpacking District

The three blocks of the High Line that remain below 14th Street are in an area that is now commonly referred to as the Meatpacking District, though this is not an official neighborhood designation, and politically is part of the much larger West Village neighborhood. What most people call the Meatpacking District largely covers the officially designated Gansevoort Market Historic District, though popular understanding of the area exceeds the boundaries of the Historic District. Officially designated as a Historic District in 2003 by the New York City Landmarks Commission (now called the Landmarks Preservation Commission) and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2007, “[t]he architecture of the district tells the story of an import era in New York City’s history when it became the financial center of the country and when its markets were expanding to serve the metropolitan region and beyond” (Shockley, 2003, p. 2). Even though the High Line, and Westside Improvement Project overall, are cited as key drivers in the Commission’s final report for the historic designation of the area, it is notable that the High Line was excluded from the district’s boundaries in 2003. Later expanded to include a larger area, including the High Line all the way to the Hudson Piers, the 2007 expansion application to the National Park Service describes in much more detail the importance of the High Line, though its history remained the same as it did in 2003: “The area’s fortunes were tied

to the railroad for over a century, from the 1850s through the demise of the elevated High Line over the 1970s and 1980s” (Howe, 2007, p. 5).

Food market originally appeared in the area as early as the 1700s and rapidly expanded in the early 1800s (Howe, 2007, p. 8:14). As a result, the Meatpacking District had distinct physical character, with mostly one-to-six story brick façade buildings, metal canopies, Belgian Block pavers on most streets, and strong overall architectural cohesion (Shockley, 2003, p. 2). As a historic district, it has retained much of this look today. Meat and meat-related industries were the primary focus of the area, while other food-related businesses also populated the market area. Many of the food-related industries in this area decamped for other areas in the 1960s and 1970s (which was related to the eventual closing of the High Line due to lack of demand), but in the 1980s the “meat market [still] bustles with activity and its enterprises have resisted pressure to relocate at Hunts Point in the Bronx” (Bennetts, 1981). As an industrial area, the Meatpacking District was truly gritty, with rotting carcass smells from meat processing wafting through the air and dirty puddles of unknown origin lingering in the subsided pockets of the Belgian block-paved streets. It was, in other words, a truly industrial area with an authentic grit that is hard to imagine in Manhattan today – and this is not meant to glorify it nostalgically but, instead, accurately convey its atmosphere.

Deindustrialization and the suburbanization of goods processing and distribution left little of the once vibrant food processing industry to backfill increasingly empty industrial spaces, nightclubs, particularly those serving gay and lesbian patrons, took their place. Starting with the club Zoo in 1970, the area’s sparse residential population and gritty atmosphere made it an excellent location for these nightclubs (Shockley, 2003, p. 19). The West Village to the south started to see the conversion of industrial buildings into housing in the early 1980s:

This flurry of conversions can only go on as long as there are available sites, and many of the prime ones have been exhausted. The meat industry area is the one prime area left that's ripe for development, and that's where most of the developers will probably turn their sights eventually. (Bennetts, 1981)

This is the area where, due to increased real estate activity, sections of the High Line were demolished in the 1980s for new development.

In the Meatpacking District to the north, one of the first non-club businesses was Florent Restaurant in 1985 (Shockley, 2003, p. 19). Florent's 24-hour French diner, which closed in 2008, chronicles much of the conversion of the Meatpacking District from a gritty, counterculture late night hangout to the ultrafashionable district it is today. Started by AIDS activist Florent Morellet, Florent was known as a neighborhood fixture and was renowned for its cross-dressing themed block parties (Yazigi, 1994). This out-of-the-way diner became a haunt for "neighborhood activists, famous drag performers, eccentric night owls, club kids, the offspring of club kids, maverick politicians, burlesque dancers, and celebrities" (Amsden, 2008). Notably, Florent became a key site for early fundraising for the High Line, mixing the neighborhood leaders' ambitions with its still authentic arts and counterculture scene. Many were positively attracted by the "crumbling beauty, its sidewalks slippery with animal fat, its meatpackers in bloodstained smocks" that others saw as a dirty, obsolete past (J. Moss, 2011). Preceding but closely paralleling the High Line itself, the remote, industrial Meatpacking District, at a speed only really known in New York and a handful of other wealthy global cities, went from off the map to one of the most fashionable neighborhoods in New York City today.

By 2004, well before the completion of the High Line, the area had already found itself on the tourist map. The *Time Out* guide for that year described the area in way that sums up its

popular history: “[I]t’s been primarily a wholesale meat market since the 1930s. Until the 1990s, it was also a prime haunt for prostitutes, many of them transsexual. In recent years, the atmospheric cobblestone streets have seen the arrival of a new type of tenant: . . . The once-lonely **Florent** . . . is now part of a chic scene . . . [and the] district also lures the fashion faithful with hot destinations . . .” (*Time out New York.*, 2004, p. 93). The guide also mentions the art scene, old and new, as well as the remaining gay clubs and bars. A special shopping section describes the area’s shift from “chops to shops” (meaning auto repair and salvage to high end boutiques) and how the area “has been braising in its own fabulousness for several years, thanks to a thriving restaurant-and-nightlife scene” (*Time out New York.*, 2004, p. 218). Or, to put it another way, the area’s remaking into one that is upscale and gentrified was well established before the High Line.

Chelsea: West Chelsea

The majority of the remaining High Line runs along the west side of the Chelsea neighborhood from north to south (with the big curve around the Hudson Yards at the north end). Chelsea, on the whole, is as a stable and pleasantly scaled residential neighborhood with strong historic character. Until relatively recently, it was not a destination neighborhood. As the *New York Times* put it in 1987, “CHELSEA has perfected one of the great tricks of cultural geography: how to hide a 75-square-block neighborhood on the edge of midtown Manhattan and Greenwich Village. For years, the area has been touted as ‘up and coming,’ yet, to the relief of many longtime residents, it has remained in the shadows of its more glittery neighbors” (Yarrow, 1987, p. C.1).

The High Line is described as being in “West Chelsea.” This is both to be more geographically specific (at its closest it is only a block from the Hudson River, the western end

of Chelsea and Manhattan), but also because West Chelsea is distinct from the rest of the neighborhood. As opposed to the rest of Chelsea, West Chelsea consisted of a mostly industrial landscape. In the *New York Times* local discovery piece praising Chelsea quoted above, West Chelsea was described as thus:

In a city known for its abrupt changes from neighborhood to neighborhood, few could be more dramatic than the transition from Chelsea's historic district east of 10th Avenue to what seems like a warehouse wasteland west of the avenue. Many community residents speak of the rusting elevated railroad tracks just west of 10th Avenue as a line beyond which they will not go . . .

But a foray into the largely uninhabited far west is like an archeological expedition to an area whose ruins are barely three generations old. (Yarrow, 1987, p. C.1)

The descriptions of the area around the High Line tend to accentuate the area's former industrial buildings, but tenements and other residential structures have been tucked into parts of West Chelsea between the warehouses since before the High Line. North of 16th street the area directly east of the High Line is residential and commercial, making the structure a border between residential and industrial Chelsea. Not just from the expansion of residential uses closer to West Chelsea as industry subsided, the area's residential and industrial buildings have existed cheek by jowl since before the High Line. One block of the eastern side of the High Line faces the short side of the massive edifice of London Terrace, an apartment complex with 1,650 apartments (for a short period, the largest apartment building in New York) was completed in 1931, before the High Line. To the north are the Elliott-Chelsea Houses, a public housing project started in 1947 and completed in 1964. Meanwhile, in the area south of 16th Street, closer to the Meatpacking District, formerly industrial lots fully surround the High Line.

Still, most accounts of the High Line's formerly industrial surroundings describe the area as desolate and a wasteland. In reality, with the decline of industrial uses, West Chelsea saw a gradual shift to other uses. Gay bars, lofts, and creative industries moved in to the once industrial spaces. But one of the key shifts was the movement of art galleries out of the rapidly appreciating SoHo area and into West Chelsea (Halle & Tiso, 2014; Molotch & Treskon, 2009). As early as 1984, the Art View column in the *New York Times* said that the art scene in Chelsea "cannot be ignored" (Russell, 1984, p. A.1), meaning, to those in the know, that it was already the next hot spot. In 1986, the Dia Art Foundation, an institution well regarded in the elite art world, moved from SoHo to Chelsea, solidifying Chelsea's place as an art center (Halle & Tiso, 2014, p. 27). For the next decade, the neighborhood slowly developed into a center of arts and nightlife. Between 1995 and 2007, a major shift of art galleries happened between SoHo and West Chelsea, making West Chelsea arguably one of the premier centers for art sales in the country (Molotch & Treskon, 2009, p. 524). Well before the High Line's existence, this shift in the art scene brought significant attention and cultural capital to the area.

Bars, clubs, and high-end shops followed, though the design of the larger industrial buildings did not as easily allow for the fine grain of commercial street activities as is present in the Meatpacking District. Chelsea Market, as described earlier, was also critical to putting the neighborhood on the map as a destination for a wider swath of New Yorkers and, more so, tourists. Recognizing that galleries played a key role in the conversion of the neighborhood into a cultural and economic hotspot, Planning Commissioner Amanda Burden stressed that zoning changes under Bloomberg would be structured to avoid their displacement. Many of the galleries in Chelsea bought their own buildings, taking particular advantage of the small buildings that were mostly mid-block, like garages and other odd little industrial spaces that peppered West

Chelsea but were unavailable in SoHo (Halle & Tiso, 2014, p. 36). Chelsea's upzoning specifically limited the conversations of these types of buildings to discourage real estate activity that would push out gallery spaces for other, more lucrative, uses. Except for its lack of subway access, West Chelsea is no longer off the map as it once was. It is now part of the urban lifestyle center, like the Meatpacking District, that surrounds the High Line and makes it an experience. As with the Meatpacking District, the High Line did not cause the shift in the neighborhood but, instead, paralleled and accentuated the ongoing process.

Art On and Off the High Line

The art scene around the High Line was further and emphatically solidified after the opening of the new Whitney Museum of American Art building in 2015. Directly connected to the Gansevoort entrance at the southern end of the High Line and designed by architect Renzo Piano, it capped off the area as an arts district that extends beyond the gallery scene and into a major destination for tourists of all types. But the relationship between the art scene and the High Line extends far beyond a symbiotic interest in attracting people to the neighborhood and the elite interest in the high design aspects of the High Line itself.

Since its opening, FHL has run a program called High Line Art to organize art exhibitions and performances on and around the High Line. The High Line hosts regular exhibitions of sculptures and performances on the structure, as well many buildings facing it displaying paintings and other visual installations. High Line commissions have become a major award for artists. Always contemporary art, commissions have been provided by such luminaries as Ed Ruscha, as well as many avant-garde up and comers. A contemporary dance and other performance art is regularly scheduled, as well. The first Curator and Director of Art on The High Line, Cecilia Alemani, ascribes lofty goals to the effort: "The art program was a way of

acknowledging and paying tribute to the artistic history of the neighborhood, while at the same time aiming to introduce contemporary art in a more democratic way, and to a wider, non-professional audience, far from the intimidating spaces of the white cube galleries found on the street level” (Alemani & Mullen Jr., 2015, p. 11). Like many aspects of the High Line, one can see art on the High Line as a public amenity and service or as self-serving for promoters who want to further West Chelsea as a key center of the world’s contemporary art market. And, as many galleries own their spaces, reinforcing West Chelsea’s cultural position also reinforces property values through accentuating cultural capital. It can, of course, be both.



FIGURE 6: ART INSTALLATION ON BUILDING FACING THE HIGH LINE. PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR 2014.

With art as a prominent and inseparable feature of the High Line, in many ways describing the High Line as an art museum is more apropos than park; it is highly a guided and

curated experience. From the partially curated views to the fully curated art, it all takes place in a structure redesigned by two starchitecture firms, which is de rigueur for art museums today. The difference is that the walls between inside and outside are broken down – the whole neighborhood is transformed into an art experience. As Hal Foster argues, the High Line blurs the genres of art and architecture (2011, p. 103). Likewise, real estate development in the neighborhood, partly sparked by the art scene and the High Line, took on the aesthetic consciousness of a New York showcase of contemporary architecture.

A Real Estate Juggernaut and Economic Dynamo

Depending on one's perspective, many different aspects the High Line can be lauded. But what few fail to mention is its success as a catalyst for urban redevelopment. The *New York Times* ran an article with a title that sums it up well: "The High Line Isn't Just a Sight to See; It's Also an Economic Dynamo" (McGeehan, 2011). Praise for the High Line from those most focused on real estate development and redevelopment in general is almost breathless at times. The High Line is, in board strokes, credited as an economic catalyst that sparked \$2 billion in real estate development and redeveloped a (by many accounts) run down, desolate neighborhood.

That a major economic transformation of the area has coincided with the High Line is not in doubt. Bloomberg claimed that, by June of 2011, the High Line and the development projects it had sparked created 8,000 construction jobs and 12,00 permanent jobs in the area (McGeehan, 2011, p. A.18). In 2012, the New York City Planning Department reported that "in the five years since construction started on the High Line, 29 new projects had been built or underway in the neighborhood" and "[m]ore than 2500 new residential units, 1,000 hotel rooms and over 500,000 square feet of office and art gallery have gone up" (Goodsell, 2012). In 2014, according to the New York City Economic Development Corporation, post rezoning the area had added 1,374

housing units, with 132 of them affordable housing, and just under 500,000 square feet of new commercial space (“The High Line,” 2014).

The New York Economic Development Corporation analyzed land values around three major New York parks (Central Park, Prospect Park in Brooklyn, and the High Line) and found that median market values for real estate within five minutes’ walking distance of the High Line increased by 103% between 2003 and 2011 (New York City Economic Development Corporation, 2011). Notably, the increase also fell off, compared to the other parks, at the 5-10 minute and over 10-minute ranges. Prospect Park in Brooklyn saw a fourfold increase across the board as well, pointing to the importance of larger real estate context when examining the impact of these parks as Brooklyn, once a more affordable borough outside the fervor of the Manhattan real estate, has become one of the top global hot spots for real estate development. Still, in context, the High Line did coincide with the surrounding neighborhood going from an 8% lower than overall median value in Manhattan, in 2003, to greater than median value in 2011. The park far exceeded the desire to bring the area into sync with the values of the rest of the Manhattan real estate market.

Brooklyn’s phenomenal changes withstanding, the change in property values that coincided with the reuse of the High Line are significant. One study of properties within two miles of the High Line showed that in 2010, after the opening of the High Line, nearby properties rose 18% in value (Levere, 2014, p. 17). In a larger total study of the area, an overall 6.9% increase in properties values meant an estimated increase in tax collections for the City of New York of \$100 million a year (Levere, 2014, p. 22). This analysis from 2014, however, does not reflect the continued increase in values from still ongoing major real estate development in the area. With the City spending approximately \$124 million on construction, recouping its

investment in the High Line likely took a little over a year. This stunningly quick return underscores how the ambitions of the High Line grew from the conservative HR&A study, which estimated that it would take 20 years to collect \$25 million in increased property tax value from the impact of the High Line.

Such increases in property values meant the TDR program of The Special West Chelsea District was a boon to existing property owners. Between 2006 and 2014, over 400,000 sf of FAR were transferred in 26 deals and “developers have complained that there aren’t enough TDRs to meet demand” (Department of City Planning, 2015, pp. 24-25). With prices per square foot of TDR FAR reported to go for between \$200 and \$400, a conservative estimate is that granting property owners in the corridor reaped at least \$80,796,600 in increased value out of the program during that time. From 2005 to 2008 and within the 600 foot buffer area around the High Line, residential floor area grew 56%, office floor area increased by 38%, and retail floor area by 91% (New York City Department of City Planning, 2013, p. 18). The area has been deemed so successful that the Department of City Planning prepared a report about expanding The Special West Chelsea District to cover more area (New York City Department of City Planning, 2013).

Unsurprisingly, the High Line’s role in the real estate transformation has been heralded as an overwhelming success by the real estate industry at large. Rents around the High Line skyrocketed almost immediately. According to Burden, prices for units at one apartment building abutting the High Line doubled in the two years after the park opened, to \$2000 per square foot (McGeehan, 2011, p. A.18). The Standard Hotel, a chic property that before the High Line would have been far off the high-end tourist map, has become a booming financial success. The 338 room hotel was completed in 2009 for \$240 million dollars and is in the process of sale for \$400

million dollars, and it is among the highest in per-room prices ever to be paid for a hotel (Karmin, 2014). Its proximity to the High Line is unbeatable, as it is also the only new building to be built over the High Line (as it had moved early and taken advantage of a quirk in zoning laws that has since been closed).

Proximity to the High Line is a key selling point. Building advertisements and marketing focus on their proximity to and views of the High Line. It has become an orienting tool for consumers that adds value and marketability. But this is not only because of proximity to an amenity; it is the about the shift of the neighborhood around the High Line, changing from someplace lesser known and with limited landmarks to a well-known, vibrant destination that people are aware of. As one real estate broker puts it, “[t]he neighborhood around The High Line has really blossomed into a vibrant and enticing place to live for all types of buyers” (Tablang, 2015). This runs a little counter to arguments that focus on the on the High Line as the key amenity that draws people in and of itself – the desire to live next to green space – which, given how development has unfolded, is an oversimplification of the High Line’s effect on New York. Take, for example, the full-page ad in the *New York Times Magazine* for a new condominium building at 500 West 21 that abuts the High Line. Boasting its location “between two of New York’s most striking landmarks,” the High Line and the nearby Theological Seminary, the marketing piece emphasizes how the building’s “expansive private garden, designed to enhance the building’s privacy, creates a masterful expression of refined city living” (“500 West 21st Street [Advertisement],” 2014). While this is but one example, the emphasis on a private park literally abutting a public one undermines an argument that the greenspace of the High Line itself is the draw – as it does other elements of the surrounding real estate development. This is not unusual when considering the details of the revitalization of the neighborhood.

Focusing only on values in real estate around the High Line misses a lot of the story of revitalization. The types of developments, the amenities, and aesthetics matter, too. High Line adjacent developments have overwhelmingly focused on avant-garde aesthetics and high-end services desired by (and affordable to) a luxury market. The Caledonia Apartments, according to its owner, the Related Group, is the first luxury apartment building to open adjacent to the High Line and offers a host of high end amenities: a 24-hour attended lobby, an Equinox Fitness Club (which is a high end fitness chain) with a resident fitness lounge, a “private space where residents can transition in and out of Equinox,” a sun terrace with barbeque areas, a business center, a children’s playroom, bike storage, a “Technology Concierge,” a meditation garden, a pet spa, valet dry cleaning, 24-hour valet parking, and more (The Related Group, n.d.). Many of the new residential developments surrounding the High Line, as well as hotels, have targeted this high-end, amenity-filled, luxury market.

Linked to the high-end market is also high-end and forward design. The area around the High Line has been deemed “Architect’s Row” by some because it has become the site for buildings by the starchitects of the day. Proposed buildings and those in the works include well-known names, such as Neil Denari, Zaha Hadid, BIG, and Jean Nouvel. The High Line, because of its exceptional modern design and the contemporary art theme that has permeated the area, has become a place for architectural experimentation, or as the Architecture Critic for the *Financial Times* put it, “the city’s most extraordinary architectural showcase” (Heathcote, 2009, p. 7). The area is said to have one of the world’s highest concentrations of buildings by Pritzker Architecture Prize winners (Ascher & Uffer, 2015, p. 228).

The areas in and around the High Line have transitioned into elite, fashionable areas of global real estate investment interest. It is difficult to be certain exactly how much credit (or

blame) the High Line deserves in this process, but it has certainly played a key role. This creates a tension between the narrative of the High Line as community park project and one as an elite economic development project. When trying to deflect the more complicated and controversial conversations about the development of the areas around the High Line into elite neighborhoods, FHL's Hammond has asserted that, in terms of economic development and revitalization, the High Line has done for the neighborhood what a subway normally would. Rapid transit has, historically, been key a key driver of neighborhood development in New York City (Scobey, 2002, p. 265). The High Line and the surrounding neighborhood was, as mentioned earlier, one of the least subway-accessible areas of Manhattan until the extended Number 7-line station opened at the very northern terminus by the Hudson Yards in 2015. Still, other than the new stop, most of the High Line – south of the Hudson Yards and the adjacent area – remains rather far from a subway line for sites that now draw so many visitors and new residents.

In 2011, Hammond told the *New York Times*, “Normally, the farther you get from the subway the less expensive the housing is . . . But the closer you are to the High Line, the farther you are from the subway, and still the closer the apartments are to the High Line the more expensive they get” (McGeehan, 2011, p. A.18). Leaving aside the irony that Hammond admits that the High Line is not really a transportation project, despite the fact that it used Federal transportation funds, this comment is interesting in a couple of ways. First, it implies that had the High Line been used for transportation, as some had advocated, it could have had a similar economic impact while also providing increased transportation access. Looking forward, the question of how to use other obsolete infrastructure – as transportation or a park – will be asked in other cities that are motivated by the High Line phenomenon. Second, while there is nothing surprising about the relationship between park proximity and rents or real estate values, this

process does allude to the need for a bigger discussion about how the High Line was involved in the process of changing the economic value of the neighborhood. As a somewhat atypical park amenity that is rather small and only allows passive activities, it is hard to understand the High Line as having the same kind of impact on values as, say, Central Park. This points to a more complex, or at least different, way in which the High Line has raised values.

Figuring out the true impact that the High Line had on urban redevelopment and real estate values is a complicated task. The very fight over the High Line's existence was already a sign of the real estate industry's growing interest in the surrounding area – the High Line did not create that background condition. As the RPA study noted, the area around the High Line was already in the process of being rezoned under the Giuliani Administration in the late 1990s, and even then the changes were already expected to easily spark new development (Regional Plan Association, 1999, pp. 5–6). When a portion on 23rd street was finally rezoned in the 1990s for residential use, “new construction occurred almost immediately” (David et al., 2002, p. 66). The major upzoning under the under the Bloomberg Administration, at an even more frothy period of Manhattan real estate development, was, along with the High Line, undoubtedly a major factor in the development of the West Side. In fact, one key part of the original FHL team, in recounting the story of the redevelopment of the High Line, quipped, “it’s really an unglamorous story of rezoning.” Though it may take some time to be able to fully reflect upon, if the two catalytic events – upzoning and the reuse of the High Line – can be separated, it is probably most reasonable to say that the High Line drove what would have been otherwise a major increase in real estate development and neighborhood change into overdrive. When looking at how the High Line has been mobilized, this is not a small point. It is often assumed the High Line was the key

catalyst for neighborhood change, but the real drivers may be more complex and context-dependent than commonly thought.

The High Line's Critics

Because immense praise for the High Line dominates media and discourse, few are aware of the High Line's critics. It is unlikely the casual observer knows of any criticisms, though in fairness, a few of the articles that deal with them have made it into major media outlets. Key criticism does exist, however, and can be categorized under three themes: equity, gentrification, and urbanism. As they have gotten relatively little attention (though there has been some scholarly attention), these issues deserve further exploration. Here, they are presented with an eye to the similarities and differences that develop in other projects that are inspired or bolstered by the High Line.

Equity

In a time generally characterized by “austerity urbanism” (Peck, 2012), the High Line is a massive public investment in a relatively small (in terms of acreage) park. While not nearly the most expensive park ever built overall, when cost is considered per acre, it is probably the most expensive major public park space ever created (Kimmelman, 2014). This substantial sum in actual or per acre costs would be a sizeable investment in the production of public space in any city, and on top of that, the High Line is a remarkably expensive park to maintain. Maintenance costs are approximately 10 times per acre what the average New York City park receives in public funding (Calder, 2009). A taxing the district around the High Line to capture revenue from adjacent properties that have benefited so substantially from their proximity to the park proved politically infeasible and failed. And while the High Line does receive an outsized share

of city parks resources (it gets more funding due to high use), this does not nearly cover the costs of complex maintenance.

FHL fills the funding gap through prodigious fundraising, which includes donations, memberships, sales of merchandise and refreshments (by vendors and directly), space rentals, and glitzy fundraisers. Although the High Line is remarkably uncommercial overall (as opposed to some early proposals that would have lined it with shops and cafes), there are food stands and a café, as well as a gift shop. The food stands sell treats like “artisan” popsicles and handmade tacos. The gift shop sells books and postcards, along with High Line branded scarves by designer Diane von Furstenberg and other fashion merchandise.



FIGURE 7: DIANE VON FURSTENBERG DESIGNED MERCHANDISE AT THE HIGH LINE GIFT SHOP. PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR 2014.

FHL was able to sell over “\$300,000 in t-shirts, books and other takeaways” in just the summer of 2011. (Goodsell, 2012). Still, FHL raises 90% of its operating budget from its various fundraising activities (“Transcript of the Minutes of the Committee on Parks and Recreation,” 2014, p. 1138).

The High Line raises two basic questions of equity and park space. The first is one of access, or proximity, and amount of space. The High Line was produced under Bloomberg’s PlaNYC, which had a goal of usable green space within a half-mile walk of 99% of New Yorkers by 2030 (*plaNYC*, 2007). As a whole, an impressive 19.5% of New York City’s land area is parks – the most of any high density city in the United States (*City Park Facts*, 2011, p. 10). However, in other measures, such as park acreage per resident, playgrounds per resident or capital spending per resident, New York City ranks in the middle or worse (*City Park Facts*, 2011, pp. 13, 16–17, 18–19). As New York is an outlier in transit research due to significantly more robust public transit use, comparing its urban parks to other American cities may not be that useful. More important is access to and proximity of parks. New York has large unevenness in access to green spaces across its urban landscape (Maroko, Maantay, Sohler, Grady, & Arno, 2009). In other words, many New Yorkers live far from the parks and/or cannot get to them easily. The High Line, arguably, did little address this problem. West Chelsea was hardly full of parks, but the RPA report noted that it was adjacent to the growing Hudson River Park, so much so that there was worry about the two parks competing for patrons (though that proved to be wrong). The Hudson River Park, when considered with the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway, of which it is a seamless part (most people incorrectly call the Greenway the Hudson River Park), is 550 acres, over 80 times larger than the High Line while over a little more than twice as long. Likewise, the complexity of rebuilding a rail viaduct into a park meant that, dollar per dollar, the

High Line produced little park land for the cost. This criticism is not meant to denigrate the High Line's value as green space, for which it is well used and open to the public. But it does point out real questions about the City's investment in the High Line as a matter of equity for park access and distribution.

The second key issue of equity is park funding and quality. New York parks vary widely in quality and upkeep – their city funding does not allow for robust maintenance and those areas without other means of funding (like special assessment districts, endowments, and other sources) tend to have poor quality spaces. Central Park, Brant Park, the High Line, and other well-known and centrally located parks have been able to use various methods of fundraising to make up for budget shortfalls. But other parks have not. As the President of NYC Park Advocates note, “New York has created a two-tier park system . . . One for the rich, the other for the poor” (Arden, 2010).



FIGURE 8: WATER FEATURE ON THE "SUN DECK" AREA OF THE HIGH LINE. PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR 2014.

Many parks in less wealthy areas of the city have so little funding that they have deteriorated, some becoming little more than barren asphalt lots (Foderaro, 2014). The High Line, though unable to convince its surrounding owners to allow a special taxing district, has still been prodigious at fundraising. Other less trafficked and less glamorous areas of the City cannot supplement their funding with Diane von Furstenberg merchandise and million-dollar donations. In essence, the neoliberal approach to parks throws neighborhoods into a competition in which they must compete for private funding for the creation and maintenance of parks. While the meager amount allocated by the City budget gives some support, the difference in quality between parks that can attract capital and donations versus those that cannot has grown to reflect the increasing inequality of the era (Loughran, 2014).



FIGURE 9: PLAQUE COMMEMORATING ONE OF THE MANY DONORS TO THE HIGH LINE. PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR 2014.

The stark differences in quality provided between the expensive high design, meticulously maintained High Line and a multitude of parks in less affluent, less accessible, and less dramatic areas cannot be ignored. The equity concerns of the High Line are not an academic discussion. Residents and activists in Queens, for example, express frustration with the attention and resources lavished on Manhattan generally and the High Line specifically, while they saw much more acute needs in their communities. Bloomberg's term as Mayor was described as an overwhelming sign of the dominance of Manhattan over the outer boroughs. Even *New York Times* Architectural Critic Michael Kimmelman, in a glowing review of the third and final phase of the High Line, could not ignore the dual symbol that the High Line has become to many New Yorkers:

With most city parks struggling to make ends meet, that kind of money [raised by the High Line] is an inevitable source of resentment, notwithstanding, that the High Line was, in significant measure, constructed and is almost exclusively maintained with private funds.

And, yes, nowhere is the city's widening economic divide clearer to see than along this stretch of Manhattan's West Side. (2014, p. c1)

For many new, well-healed residents living near the High Line, the park is symbol of sophistication and urban revitalization. For other less affluent New Yorkers, it has come to represent the heightened inequality of resources between neighborhoods. Or, as architect and critic Michael Sorkin wittily said about the High Line, "It's a fabulous amenity for the already fabulous" (personal communication, September 19, 2014).

Gentrification

The issue of gentrification in New York City is one of great complexity and heated debate. It is, and always has been, a problem in growing, prospering cities, and may be unavoidable, as well as preferable to stagnation according to some views. The High Line plays a role in this debate as both a tool and an icon of neighborhood change. As discussed earlier, the High Line has been associated with huge increases in real estate prices and rents in the surrounding neighborhood. The areas seeing the biggest change were formerly industrial and not densely residential. But there were residents, and its liminal status in the Manhattan real estate game had made it a growing refuge for some in an increasingly unaffordable island. The areas around the High Line have undergone what, in many ways, is a repeat of what Urban Geographer Neil Smith so vividly described in the Lower East Side of New York: "Former working-class and poor sections of the old city are dragged into the circuits of international capital as Lower East Side art is shown in London and Paris, and its fanciest condos are advertised in the *Times* and *Le Monde*" (1992, p. 89). This description is as apt for the areas around the High Line as it is for the Lower East Side. And while the dynamics that played out on the Lower East Side seem to be repeating around the High Line, there are differences. Hackworth (2002) argues that the gentrification that had taken place in New York since the early 1990s had assumed a different form than early phases of gentrification. He notes that corporate developers are now involved in the initial stages, the state undergirds the process more directly, anti-gentrification movements are politically marginalized, and land economics have changed in ways that accelerate neighborhood change. Hackworth's analysis rings true in many ways when considering the issues of gentrification around the High Line. While one faction of real estate capital fought the High Line, another recognized it as a tool for sparking even greater real estate returns and, as

described earlier, became key advocates and partners for the project. Under Mayor Bloomberg, the City of New York was a key driver of the project, which was part and parcel of plans to increase real estate values (and tax collections) in the surrounding areas. The fact that the High Line was a public green space that was open to all has been used to defuse claims of it as a tool of gentrification. And the intense land values in New York make change so rapid that there is often little if any time to respond.



FIGURE 10: THE RELATED COMPANIES ABINGTON HOUSE APARTMENTS NEAR THE HUDSON YARDS ON THE HIGH LINE. PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR 2014.

Building off these arguments, this rapid, intense form of gentrification in New York has been termed by one vocal High Line critic, Jeremiah Moss, as “hyper-gentrification” (2014a, 2014b): a term inspired by Hackworth and Smith’s concept of “third-wave gentrification” (2001). Jeremiah Moss, a pseudonym, and his popular blog *Vanishing New York*, has been an outspoken critic of the High Line, though his interest in gentrification and the erasure of New York’s past extend to the entire city. In a controversial *New York Times* Op-Ed, Moss called the High Line a “tourist-clogged catwalk and a catalyst for some of the most rapid gentrification in the city’s history” (2012, p. A25). To Moss, the park, which at the time of his editorial was still unfinished, was not an icon of revitalization; instead, it was “destroying the neighborhoods as it grows” (2012, p. A25). And Moss’s opinion of the High Line post-completion has not changed.

Neil Smith’s work is informative for thinking about the High Line’s surroundings not only because it is based on New York, but for its focus on the apropos theme of “frontier”: “As a new frontier, the city bursts with optimism. Hostile landscapes are regenerated, cleansed, reinfused with middle-class sensibility; real estate values soar; the new urbanites are upwardly mobile; elite gentility is democratized as mass-produced distinction” (1992, p. 70). Like the railroads that led into the Wild West, the High Line is credited with transforming its surroundings. As exemplified by articles in the *New York Times* and many other sources, West Chelsea was very much understood to a wider public as a frontier – an uncharted territory or off the map. The High Line was the centerpiece of this imaginary: a paradoxically wild, untamed place still existing in Manhattan. The High Line’s frontier qualities were part of what made it cool and why its design heavily leans on the notion of preserving part of that mystique. The High Line’s design and mystique links it to an imagined past that exemplified that “[f]rontier is a style as much a place” (N. Smith, 1992, p. 71). Likewise, the expensive, well supplied, and hardly

wild neighborhood that the areas around the High Line have transformed into today fit Smith's claim that "[t]he substance and consequence of the frontier imagery is to tame the wild city" (1992, p. 75). The High Line and its relationship with the art scene in Chelsea were, as Smith described in the Lower East side, a "culture industry . . . [that] converted urban destruction into ultra chic" (1992, p. 75).



FIGURE 11: ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE RELATED COMPANIES HIGH LINE PROPERTIES ON THE DOOR OF THEIR CALEDONIA APARTMENT BUILDING CONNECTED TO THE PARK. PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR 2014.

Picking up on the role of the culture industry and its aesthetics, Rothenberg and Lang argue that it is a central element of the High Line-related process of change in the surrounding neighborhood (2015). The sharp increase in rents and prices undoubtedly led to displacement, but between the nearby public housing and those who fall under New York City's rent regulation, many have been able to stay. The process of gentrification around the High Line has, therefore, partly become one in which the "glittering surface effects of the HLP [High Line project] and surrounding developments deliberately mask the social inequalities on which such displays of opulence depend" (Rothenberg & Lang, 2015, p. 11). The process in West Chelsea is even more of a cultural gentrification than a displacement one. For the queer community, the High Line played a role not only in the physical displacement of many of its social institutions through real estate change, but also in symbolic change, in part that the High Line's key driving actors were two gay men (Patrick, 2013). Lower income residents who remain find aesthetic and social exclusion due to the High Line and attendant development. This side-by-side divide has become extreme enough that West Chelsea was featured in a documentary film *Class Divide* (Levin, 2015). The opportunities for residents in, for example, the adjacent Chelsea-Elliot Homes public housing are worlds apart from those of the new residents. Additionally, a loss of consumer goods and services affordable to the remaining low-income residents has changed their sense of belonging and their ability to make their daily rounds. As one longtime resident of the London Terrace apartments put it, "What does the High Line do for us? There are no supermarkets opening, no shoe repair stores, nothing that would enhance the neighborhood for those who live here with basic services. But there's nothing we can do about it" (Humm, 2012).

Urbanism

A third theme of criticism of the High Line has to do with urbanism. For some, the High Line is at odds with the urbanism of New York. Again, Jeremiah Moss has been a vocal critic. Moss's arguments against the High Line not only focus on gentrification but also emphasize its role as something that remakes the city for tourist consumption: "another stop on the must-see list for out-of-towners, another chapter in the story of New York City's transformation into Disney World" (2012, p. A25). The High Line's design is inextricable from class concerns (Morenas, 2012), and it is, to many, a symbol and manifestation of the process of the wiping away of New York as place of everyday experiences for anyone but tourists or the well-heeled and glamorous. Moss's blog, *Vanishing New York*, is filled with examples of neighborhood change in the areas around the High Line – the loss of neighborhood commercial institutions and structures for the new New York. To drive it home, the full name of the blog is: JEREMIAH'S VANISHING NEW YORK: A.K.A THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS: A BITTERLY NOSTALGIC LOOK AT A CITY IN THE PROCESS OF GOING EXTINCT.

In a remarkable irony that demonstrates Moss's point, Florent's diner, the Meatpacking District eatery that had become an early fixture of the post-industrial neighborhood and its gay community, as well as a key site of early FHL fundraisers, was caught up in the process and "wiped off the map" ("Florent," 2008). With the High Line still under construction and a year from opening, the restaurant's lease came up for renewal. The landlord raised the rent from \$6,180 a month to \$35,000 a month, forcing the reasonably-priced eatery to close (Amsden, 2008). The lamentations chronicled by Moss and others are not just a sentimental view of the process playing out in West Chelsea and New York as a whole. This "industrial gentrification,"

as in shifting the type of commercial activity, was hastened by the reuse of High Line (Yoon & Currid-Halkett, 2014).

More than a process of changing the compositions of neighborhoods and the street life around it, the dearth of commercial activity on the High Line itself, while admirable in the desire to be relatively uncommercial (i.e., not lined with shops and stores), is in many ways the antithesis of the classic idea of the Manhattan street experience. It substitutes the prototypical Manhattan street experience of a varied and rich commercial fabric, like that idealized by Jane Jacobs' (1992) account of the West Village, with something very different. John Rennie Short has called the experience a "managed *flânerie*" that converts the experience of an old, working, industrial city into one of leisure (2012, p. 139). Short essentially praises the High Line as a new way to experience the ever-changing city, but Moss's and others' criticisms still stand – it is not where one can see the acting out of traditional street life and uncontrolled experience, but instead a guided, separate, and curated experience broken into digestible landscape vignettes of the city.

The High Line's design and execution also represents key physical aspects of modernism applied to urban form: grade and traffic separation, flow, and the city as tableaux. This pits it against the now long-standing postmodern movement that emphasizes place, integration, and a more inward gaze. Today, the mantle for this type of postmodern urbanism is largely held by the New Urbanism movement. And, unsurprisingly, many in the New Urbanist movement have been fierce critics of the High Line. Their criticisms have been less concerned with the class issues central to critics like Moss (though the High Line's enormous cost per acre and attendant issue of equity have not gone unnoticed by the New Urbanists), instead putting more focus on the physical experience of urbanism. Much can be gleaned from the handwringing over the High Line that was peppered throughout Andrés Duany's (2013) collection of essays and debates in

Landscape Urbanism and Its Discontents. New Urbanists, broadly, see the contemporary battle for the future of urban space as post-suburban infill of cities, and now “between the New Urbanism and Landscape Urbanism, two paradigms with differing visions of nature and society” (Duany, 2013, p. 3). Landscape Urbanism, a kind of second coming of tower-in-the-park modernism, rejects the old forms of the city – blocks, street walls, and separation between nature and the urban. New Urbanism, conversely, embraces all of those things, and promotes a more compact, mixed-use, walkable urbanism, with less open space.

There is an overlap between the concerns of those like Moss and New Urbanism. The New Urbanists embrace the existing fabric of Manhattan because “Manhattan’s urbanism was a model for the New Urbanism” (Duany, 2013, p. 5). As such, it is ironic that Manhattan’s High Line has become the showpiece for Landscape Urbanism, as that movement had notably excluded Manhattan from their organizing discourse (Duany, 2013, p. 5). To Landscape Urbanists, Manhattan is not a model of urbanism but, instead, something to be reformed. The High Line is an intervention with that aim, representing their goal, as put by Waldheim, of using “infrastructural systems and the public landscapes they engender as the very ordering mechanisms of the urban field itself, shaping and shifting the organization of urban settlement” (2006, p. 39).

That the Landscape Urbanism rejects Manhattan, a model for the New Urbanism, and then lands the movement’s most successful project there must sting. Much of the debate between these two sides is a battle for the hearts and minds of public discourse on urbanism. But, in reality, the High Line is arguably a poor target for New Urbanism. First, it is such an overwhelming success on many levels, as most New Urbanists would now admit, some begrudgingly. Second, the scale and level of integration at which Landscape Urbanism is

required to work, in order to make landscape the fundamental building block of urban form, cannot be achieved through a limited intervention like the High Line. It looks like Landscape Urbanism, with much of Corner's distinct aesthetic, but it does not have the scale or scope to be a full-fledged example of the movement. In fact, there is much in common here with the problem faced by the New Urbanism, in which a throwback or retro Americana aesthetic is often mistaken for (or used in place of) the practice of New Urbanism. In fairness, Corner and the Landscape Urbanists do fully embrace the High Line as a symbol of their movement even if it does not live up to their vision. Still, the High Line is not the best proving ground for the debate between the New Urbanism and Landscape Urbanism writ large. It has not substantially changed the physical form and use of the streets around it, instead rearranging the makeup of what is offered and who is there.

This is not to say that no important issues have been raised. For all the high theory applied to the debate, James Howard Kunstler, never one to mince words, focuses on a key argument that's seldom broached: "We would benefit more from the deliberate creation of beautifully designed streets and boulevards at grade level" (2009). Is the high design and high fashion outcome that is the High Line better (value, experience, and benefit to the residents of the neighborhood/city), and as potentially enduring as, the many, nicely outfitted boulevards that could have been built with the resources instead? Would repairing, extending, and enhancing the existing physical fabric and patterns of Manhattan in the neighborhoods around the High Line been a better solution in regards to public benefit, cost, and equity? There is a deep battle here over the future of urbanism – what is needed, what is wanted and what can be afforded. On the one hand, the High Line can be dismissed as a kind of one-off, the special product of the wealth, fame, unusual obduracy of an industrial relic and its unique context, as Kunstler does (Duany,

2013, p. 136). This is a position worth more consideration, and it is one echoed in key ways by Witold Rybczynski (2011, p. WK9). However, the High Line is not simply a project in New York – it has been mobilized into a global phenomenon. It has become a worldwide touchstone for the future of urbanism, not only as a model for urban revitalization, but a model for a new(ish) type of urbanism – or at least the idea of a one. Its influence and meaning cannot be ignored.

Chapter V **Mobilizing the High Line: Making a Traveling Urban Imaginary**

The High Line's production as a 'real' place never occurred far from the theater of the world stage. Taking place in a global center of capital, media, and culture, the phenomenon of the High Line had national and international reach from its earliest fights over reuse. Articles about seemingly local interest details of the redevelopment of the High Line in the New York Times, for example, made their way around the nation and world in the "newspaper of record." Criticisms, being less covered in major media and discourse, were overshadowed by the extensive, often breathless, tales of success about the High Line and its surroundings. These tales and the excitement they created have certainly traveled. Today, the High Line is arguably one of the foremost contemporary urban revitalization and greenspace icons. From what many considered a long shot idea, it has become an inspiration and justification for a wide range of urban regeneration efforts in cities around the globe. As a prescient architecture critic for the Philadelphia Enquirer put it, the High Line is "[t]he Pied Piper of Parks . . . Every city wants one" (Saffron, 2011, p. E1).

This kind of circulation of urban planning and development phenomenon is far from new, though the focus on how it functions, particularly in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, has become an important focus of contemporary study. In the process of investigating urban revitalization, planning ideas, and models or practices that 'travel' or are 'in motion,' numerous metaphors for what exactly has been mobilized have been developed. Most, like 'policy transfer' and 'best practices,' emphasize organized networks, rational policy actors,

and clearly delineated models, policies, and ideas. However, technological change in the production and distribution of media and discourse, as well as a contemporary political context that valorizes ideas that come from the community over the government, experts, and formal networks, leads these notions of what travel may miss key shifts in the processes at work. The High Line, as a storied revitalization project in a city that is arguably one of the world's most important producers of aspirational urbanism today, provides a helpful case for examining the contemporary process of mobilization. What travels of the High Line is more than a model, practice, or idea that is transferred by experts and formal networks. By building upon the plentiful work around traveling and mobility, this chapter argues that the High Line that travels is best understood as a 'traveling urban imaginary'.

Looking at the High Line as a traveling urban imaginary puts the focus on how an accretive narrative incorporates the particulars of the High Line's history, redevelopment process, urban context, and global aspirations of urban experience. These were all put in motion through the popular discourses that shaped the revitalization phenomenon in the public imagination. Seeing the High Line through this lens invites more understanding about why these types of projects are powerful motivators of revitalization practices in other contexts. Emphasis is put on the narratives, meanings, and aspirations embodied in the imaginary, which in turn de-emphasizes the role of formal networks and related technical-rational positioning as policy interventions. Without yet getting into the details of how the High Line "lands," or mutates and becomes situated other contexts, the contours of it as an urban imaginary will be identified and examined.

The contours of this traveling imaginary, the main characteristics of the High Line's imaginary that have been mobilized, can be revealed by examining public discourse in media,

blogs, and other outlets. By identifying these themes, or contours, through exploring the notion of a traveling urban imaginary, a useful lens of the High Line as a mobilized redevelopment idea and practice is found. These contours are important to recognize, as they embody key aspects of contemporary global urban aspirations – what people around the world desire and admire in the High Line’s imagined outcome. Likewise, they can also provide an opportunity for the critical examination not only of how these imaginaries motivate urban revitalization projects, but how well they actually fit the contexts and needs of the places where they are transferred.

An “Urban Revolution”: Everyone Wants One

As discussed earlier, sparking the public imagination was key to turning the political tide in favor of the redevelopment of the High Line in Manhattan’s West Side. As Hammond recognized, the High Line’s existence in the public mind was a reflection of the dreams and imaginations that filled it before it was even opened to the public. The excitement around this potential dream world pulsed through the media and various internet outlets locally, nationally, and internationally. The High Line’s making and success was, accordingly, an internationally recognized phenomenon. As one *Wall Street Journal* reporter noted, the High Line has become “one of the world’s best-known urban-renewal projects” (Kwaak, 2014).

It is hard to overstate the excitement and attention the High Line has provoked in both the press and wider public discourse. Even a casual observer of urbanism and urban development will likely be familiar with the project – few other urban projects make for a debate the Opinion section of the *New York Times*, on multiple occasions (J. Moss, 2012; Rybczynski, 2011). In various media and discourse the High Line has been heralded as an innovation, a masterpiece of design, a redevelopment catalyst, a new form of public space, and so much more. It deserves much praise. It is both a truly enjoyable (if a questionably novel) experience and a major

investment in public open space that has sparked the imagination of people around the world regarding their own urban environments. As an architecture critic for the *Philadelphia Enquirer* described in a review after the opening of the second section of the High Line, it “may turn out to be the most influential work of architecture completed during the boom years, the Guggenheim Bilbao of its decade. Every city wants one” (Saffron, 2011).

Seeing the same global impact, Michael Sorkin has called the High Line a “species of the Bilbao effect,” (personal communication, September 19, 2014). The Guggenheim Bilbao has been recognized as a leading urban redevelopment practice of the last two decades, one predicated on a high-design museum as a centerpiece and catalyst of urban revitalization and international attention (e.g., Gomez, 1998; Gonzalez, 2010; McNeill, 2012). Similarly, on the heels of the High Line’s initial success, media outlets and others began to identify “descendants of the High Line” (Jaffe, 2011), covering the growing number of projects inspired or bolstered by the High Line’s innovation and success (Shevory, 2011; Taylor, 2010a). As the ranks of these “descendants” have grown, they have become widespread and varied in background, typology, context, and programing. In other words, the phenomenon has grown from repurposing elevated linear rail infrastructure into park space to the reuse and creation of new spaces that seem wildly dissimilar from the High Line. These “descendants” are explored in more detail in the next chapter, while this one will focus on how, and what of, the High Line travels. With such wide influence, particularly as it moves beyond the realm of reusing urban rail infrastructure and into seemingly unrelated typologies of space it becomes clear that what transfers about the High Line is not so much a well delineated idea, policy, or practice to be adopted elsewhere, but something more.

Mobilizing

As covered in the introduction, the concept of traveling and related ideas have become a vital part of contemporary urban research. The mobilities literature is helpful in framing investigation of the High Line phenomenon. Investigating the production of the High Line as a mobilized phenomenon calls for more theorizing on how it conceptual formed into something that can move. Since the High Line and its attendant neighborhood change is a largely physical outcome, the first step in mobilizing it is converting a real, physical place or policy outcome into a form that can travel:

[It] must be simplified and abstracted into an idea, or at least approximated in a narrative permitting a vicarious experience, and therefore converted into words or images. Neither can words nor images travel until they have materialized, until they are embodied, inscribed or objectified, as only bodies or things can move in time or space. (Czarniawska & Sevon, 2005, p. 9)

This process of inscription is important, and it is not a neutral one. It both requires a process of “editing” and “flattening.” Editing refers to the fact that the object being mobilized is purposefully changed:

The process of inscribing a real thing into an idea or an account of practice may be formulated more clearly and made more explicit; however, the editing process may also change not only the form of the idea or account but also its focus, content, and meaning. (Hedmo, Shalin-Andersson, & Wedlin, 2005, p. 195)

Likewise, flattening is the reduction of real places and practices so that they can be mobilized and communicated. As such, it relies on the construction of abstract models of urbanism,

successful cities, and lauded projects or policies as exemplars and guides. Through the creation of cities as models, individual, real, and complex assemblages are flattened with “the figurative uprooting and making mobile of certain places as referential components of particular models” (McCann & Ward, 2012, p. 329). The same is true not just for cities, but also more specific practices and models, like individual urban redevelopment practices. It must be kept in mind that these models are socially constructed narratives. This means not only that “the thing moved from one place to another cannot emerge unchanged” (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005, p. 8) but it also “problematizes politics of knowledge practices” (Peck, 2011, p. 775). The transfer is always mediated in some way and shaped by the choice of narratives, metaphors, symbols, and mediums.

This process of editing and flattening is deeply tied to questions of rationality and power, and is helpfully explored by Gonzalez (2010) in her work on policy tourism in two well-known mobilized urban redevelopment models. Gonzalez’s analysis of the actions and interpretations of policy tourists resulted in four important insights into the process of model making and mobility. Gonzalez found that “urban policy tourists learn particular lessons from their visits to these cities based on a stylized and partial version constructed by local authorities of what is happening, with none or very little engagement with more critical and alternative voices” (2010, p. 1413). Therefore, policy tourism is not a rational and technical fact-finding process, but instead a circumscribed vision of what local actors want to display. Second, Gonzalez points out “that actors involved in the policy tourism business do not just belong to the formal sphere of state (bureaucrats, politicians, etc.), but expand to incorporate other communities such as researchers, interest-groups, businesses and think-tanks” (2010, p. 1414). Transfer agents, the people and organizations actively involved in the transfer of policies and ideas, are, instead of a limited set,

a complex network of actors. Third, these actors construct a script out of their experience to promote it back home: “Stylized stories . . . through their diffusion and repetition, arguably become part of the script of ‘what works’ in urban regeneration—they become hegemonic and part of a wider code according to which some ideas are deemed possible and others are discarded” (Gonzalez, 2010, pp. 114–1415). Fourth is how “[a]ctors in the network [of policy tourism/mobile urbanism] adopt different power positions depending on their perceived status in the global urban hierarchy” (Gonzalez, 2010, p. 1410). Perceived status matters, and it plays an increasingly larger role in how ideas are mobilized, travel, and land. New York is not only well established as a leading “global city” (Sassen, 1991), it is also well established as a contemporary center of global success that “other cities will both envy and try to emulate” (Rykwert, 2000, p. 189).

Gonzales illustrates key parts of the more formal and structured policy and idea transfer process, a great many of which occurred with the High Line. Policy tourism on the High Line has not been tracked, but it has clearly been robust, as many policy tourists have undoubtedly made self-tours of the High Line along with the throngs of other tourists. In addition to this, FHL, the City of New York, and other organizations have hosted many groups of policy tourists. One example is when Jeff Shumaker, Chief Urban Designer for the City of New York, gave a tour and workshops for an Australian group in September of 2014. Shumaker writes that “[a]s delegations from other cities and countries visit the High Line, they always ask, ‘How can we create our own High Line?’” (J. Green, 2015, p. 90). This formal, planned encounter, and others like it, allow for more structured engagement, such as the opportunity to “say a bit more about the underlying zoning for the HL [High Line] and West Chelsea” that happened with the

Australian group in the post-tour workshop (Robert Lane, personal communication, September 11, 2014).

Conferences, meetings, and other professional trainings in New York have made visiting the High Line a centerpiece of urban revitalization and parks education. For example, the Urban Land Institute's (ULI) 2014 Fall Meeting, the Responsible Property Investment Council organized a tour and presentation with FHL ("Responsible Property Investment Council Agenda," 2014). One attendee, writing about the overall experience, said, "The success of the High Line and its contribution to the transformation of west Manhattan was also prevalent in all the meetings and sessions that I attended" (Rudnak, n.d.). In a similar fashion, a presentation at the 2015 Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat Conference in New York covered the "High Line Effect" and "identified the ingredients that allowed this confined liner park to serve as a catalyst for urban transformation" (Ascher & Uffer, 2015, p. 224).

Although relatively few of the vast number of formal policy actors and allied professionals can make it to the High Line in person, numerous case studies, conference sessions, videos and other formats have extended the High Line as an exemplary practice through more formal networks and organizations. The ULI's Center for Active Design, for one, includes the High Line as one of their 29 case studies ("The High Line," n.d.). These cases (which seldom are very thorough or detailed) make their way across the world through organized sessions, newsletters, and more. In January of 2015, for example, the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects in Saint Louis, Missouri held a lunchtime film series featuring the film "Reimagining Lincoln Center and the High Line" (Checkerboard Foundation, 2012). The film glowingly covers the reuse of the High Line and the role of DS+R as its architects. Twenty-six people attended, and while there was little discussion, it did conclude with a few remarks

from the attendees about how the High Line might or might now fit within the context of St. Louis. Whether or not attendees knew of the High Line before the event, they undoubtedly left with the impression that it was a glowing success of their profession, and that it has a place in their personal repertoire as an idea and model.

The High Line has also spread via trade magazines and industry publications. For example, the leading trade magazine for the field of hospitality design published an article covering the “High Line effect” (“The High Line Effect,” 2009, p. 86). The article touts the High Line as a boon for the revitalization of its neighborhood and tourism, as well as how other cities are seeking to develop their own, similar projects to capitalize on its success. It is a formal and legitimizing way of transferring the High Line as a practice to professional networks well beyond the confines of New York and those who can be policy tourists.

Many of the publications, case studies, and other mediums that promote the High Line are also available to the general public. Crossing the line between formal networks and the public, Robert Hammond’s (2011) TED talk shows a formal way of conveying to the broad public a specific narrative about the High Line. The TED organization positions itself “as a new pragmatic space for experts who are given a chance to disseminate knowledge outside their disciplinary communities” (Caliendo & Compagnone, 2014, p. 105). Hammond’s TED video has had over 650 thousand views as of September 2016 and is an excellent example of the formal and purposeful system that promotes and spreads the High Line as a policy idea and model, couched in the organized trappings of transferring expertise.

Hammond’s TED talk is also significant because it illustrates two other details. The first is the production of Hammond and David as experts and, therefore, part of the system of disseminating the High Line with a sense of authority. Both of them have entered the paid

speaking circuit. David and Hammond are listed individually with the All American Speakers agency with commanding speaking fees of \$10,001 to \$20,00 (All American Speakers, n.d.; “Joshua David Biography,” n.d.). Their biographies focus on their roles in the redevelopment of the High Line and the awards they have received, like the Rome Prize and the Jane Jacobs Award, that bolster their bona fides. Second, Hammond’s TED talk is an example of FHL’s active effort to promote and spread the High Line. FHL, according to a key member of the organization, purposefully wanted it to be a model of adaptive reuse. As a result, not only is keeping it in the public eye imperative for fundraising, it is a core organizational goal of FHL to spread the model around the world. Instead of just advertising their success, FHL has provided assistance and support to the descendants of the High Line, like the proposed Embankment in Jersey City, New Jersey.

The above are samples of the extensive mobilization of the High Line as a policy and idea via more formal networks for professionals, policy-related organizations, and policy actors. This is undoubtedly a key part of the process of mobilizing the High Line and deserves attention. Wrapped in a notion of expertise and technical rationality, the rather consistent and uncritical narrative that has developed about the High Line through these processes generally goes unexamined. These more formal networks, however, are less influential and less important than they once were, and they do less to explain the spread of the High Line than what may once have been the case. Increasingly, places are “unbounded” in their relations and interact through multiple levels and channels (McCann & Ward, 2012, p. 327). The ever-quickening transfer of images, media, and other forms of communication between all places at all levels means that ideas and practices travel through a dizzying array of channels and mediums – and to more and different people. Looking beyond more official, structured channels and processes is a difficult

and daunting task, but it is one that should be incorporated into the examination of mobilized ideas and practices. In doing this, one approach is to put more emphasis on the narrative that has been created, and how it plays to the public imagination.

The Urban Imaginary

The constructed narrative and image, and how it sparks the imagination and how it differs from the real place or object, deserves consideration when investigating mobilized policies and ideas. However, it can also be easily overlooked. The policy perspective, which is dominant in contemporary urban planning, is understood as a rational exercise and, when following it, must “reduce the city to an abstract, rational order” (Chambers, 1986, p. 183). Likewise, building off insights largely from actor-network theory, Robert Beauregard argues that in the rational model of planning “[s]pace and things passively await manipulation . . . relevant only because [they are] the object of planning expertise” (2012, p. 2). But spaces and things – and the meanings and understandings attached to them – are not trivial in their mobilization. As Ian Chambers argues, “[t]he city exists as a series of doubles: it has official and hidden cultures, it is a real place and a site of the imagination” (1986, p. 183).

Likewise, what is suggested here is that the concept of the “urban imaginary” provides a helpful, though not novel, addition to the investigation of mobilized planning and development phenomenon. Urban imaginary stems from the underlying notions that the city and its components as not only a place of imagination, but also a place of such complexity that it can only be understood through the use of imagination: “Metaphors, analogies and images are the means by which we make that historically produced and increasingly unrepresentable urban space intelligible and psychically negotiable” (Donald, 1992, p. 452). A city may, in part, be describable as empirical statistics, but this inevitably flattens human experience. From this basic

but significant observation flows a number of ways of describing and negotiating how people construct a city through imagination and practice.

The concept of the urban imaginary comes out of multiple sources and perspectives. One early, key conceptual source is *Imagined Communities*, by Benedict Anderson (2006). Anderson describes how the modern notion of the nation state or, more as he calls it “nationness,” is a cultural artifact as opposed to material reality (B. Anderson, 2006, p. 4). The spread of the nation state was a phenomenon of language, models, colonialism, and capitalism. Through shared language and symbols, people could begin to imagine themselves as part of a community of people with whom they had no direct connection. The production of early nations through the development of a shared vernacular and the emergence of print capitalism created a “visible model” for nationness (B. Anderson, 2006, p. 67). This model spread throughout the world to create a world of nation states. Anderson compellingly argues that the nation state was not necessarily a natural historical-political progression; instead, it was an imagined idea of one place, developed in specific historical circumstances, which spread throughout the world and was enabled by new technologies and social dynamics. Anderson’s recognized how imagined communities produce models that travel, the suggestion here of bringing it into conversation with mobilities to describe a phenomenon of traveling urban imaginaries is not really novel.

Building on Anderson’s concept, Cinar and Bender bring the concept of the imaginary more directly into conversation with the production of urban culture in the contemporary era. They broaden Anderson’s field to include modern, varied forms of communication and discourse that shape a more appropriately contemporary image of the urban imaginary:

The collective imagination operates not only through the written text . . . but also through a variety of different media in daily life, which is a cast field of collective experience.

The urban experiences involve travels, interactions, and communicative practices of people within a city, which function to weave a sense of connectedness in space and in turn serve to imagine the city as a single place. The sorts of daily practices that . . . include popular media, film, art, and radio and market relations of personal networks that function similar as tools for the building of a collective imagination. (Çinar & Bender, 2007, p. xiv)

While the focus is on the production of a local urban imaginary for a city, the same applies to how individual neighborhoods or parts of that city become imagined (Çinar & Bender, 2007, p. xvi). Every urban neighborhood or site is interpreted through the imagination as a “cool” place, a “poor” place, a “backward” place, a “Black” place, etc. Building on this, these imaginaries travel around cities, regions, nations, and the world. Cities’ internal imaginaries also become external ones, and are ever more present in lives outside the city since images and narratives now travel so easily and quickly.

The external urban imaginary is of particular importance concerning the framing of iconic world cities. As Bender writes, “[i]n the case of global cities like Los Angeles, images or representations tend to precede experience, and they contribute to the constitution of experience or, better, the interpretation or meaning given to experience” (2007, p. 269). The urban imaginary creates a lens by which places are interpreted from the outside. Additionally, the development of this external imaginary cannot be separated from many of the acts of “urban branding” (Klingmann, 2007; Wilson, 2011; Zukin, 2014). The ways that urban regeneration policies and ideas move, as detailed by Gonzales and others, indicate that the urban imaginary – both in broad and specific levels – must play a role in the production of models, how they transfer, and what lands. The urban imaginary and images, narratives, etc. that construct them are

"a conscious act," worthy of attention (Donald, 1992, p. 451). Investigating mobilized planning policies and ideas as a traveling urban imaginary should give some insights into what is really "traveling" from the High Line and what it means.

Forming the High Line's Urban Imaginary

The High Line's reuse was predicated on an imaginary. Sternfeld's photos of the High Line's unknown wildscape floating over Manhattan sparked the imagination, the narration of its industrial past stoked it, and the dreamy renderings of FHL's design competition expanded its possibilities. Today, being lauded as a neighborhood savior and the future of urbanism gives immense weight to the imaginary that has coalesced around the High Line. It has taken on a larger image than that of a park or redevelopment project, as "New York's High Line, a public Park elevated over the streets of Manhattan's west side, has helped to spark and urban revolution" (Fedele, 2014). Not just a park, it has been morphed into a symbol of a type of urbanism, an imagined place of the urban future, a place that transforms the old city into the future one.

This image of a dream-world is both pushed by the supporters of the High Line, needing to keep the project in the public eye to raise funds, and the many tourists whose breathless reports relay the wonders of the world to those back home. These two dynamics work hand in hand. For example, an iteration of the Diane von Furstenberg designer merchandise line in the summer of 2014 at FHL's gift shop was covered with the slogan "dreams come true on the High Line." Other shirts for sale at the time read "park in the sky" to emphasize its uniqueness and dream-like qualities.



FIGURE 12: SHIRT IN HIGH LINE GIFT SHOP. PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR 2014.

The many visitors, reporters, and others that experience the High Line relay this dreamy image to the world through media, blogs, travelogues, guides, message boards and more. As a top attraction for visitors to New York, the High Line is now a fixture on lists of top things to do and a regular part of the regular tourist circuit. But not only is it increasingly part of an almost de rigueur New York tourist experience, it is a draw in its own right. People organize to see it, it is worthy of a trip. The experience, which, again, is quite for most visitors captivating, is one to share – and one that produces compelling content.

Much of the recapping of the High Line to the folks back home takes on the air of early accounts of “picturesque travel.” The accounts are too lengthy to recount here, but they are easily obtained from places like the travel sections of media outlets and the copious user-generated content on travel sites like Trip Advisor. In these accounts, the High Line becomes a “star-gazing event” (Boyer, 1994, p. 238) for visitors, who both relay the minute details of clever design as well as the picturesque framing of the striking Manhattan background. The discourse created by these visitors reflects what M. Christine Boyer describes, concerning picturesque travel, as “a way to escape the tedium of everyday life, projecting oneself into an exotic milieu . . . as well as telescoping experience, drawing faraway background as a place full of mystery and adventure into the foreground . . .” (1994, p. 247). This notion of framing space on the High Line is important too because, unlike many mobilized redevelopment projects, it is particularly difficult to imagine as a single piece. For example, the Guggenheim Bilbao, the high-design museum that is the centerpiece of imagery of the renowned regeneration of Bilbao, acts as a clear symbol of the process. The concept is easily communicated by pictures that put the Museum in the center of a revitalized urban waterfront. While the use of the symbol flattens the wider context of regeneration, which was much more than the museum, it in some ways rightly communicates the

idea of the Bilbao effect that it sparked – a high-design museum as a catalyst for the regeneration of an urban neighborhood.

An image of the High Line with the same condensed meaning, however, is quite difficult to distill. Borrowing from Kevin Lynch, it is not “imagable” as one site (1960). A distant aerial photograph of it as a long, skinny structure is the only way to capture it all. But photographs that try to capture the whole structure background much detail, and are distant and are unsatisfying. Because of this and despite the image-heavy discourse that circulates about the High Line, aerial photographs of the entire structure are not widely used. Images of the on the ground experience, however, cut out most of the park and are unable to capture the experience of moving through it, which is so key to the experience. The High Line travels in minutely framed images and snippets, each one carrying a specific message but unable to represent a whole, consistent image. Add this to the reports and tales of the High Line, imbued with the “residue of a dream world” that precedes the actual experience (Cataldi et al., 2012), and that is what really travels of the High Line.

Origin Story and New Imaginaries

The mobilized High Line is different than the real, layered one that contains a much more complicated experience and history. There is little point in trying to couch the High Line as something prosaic – it certainly is not – but for all its hype and exciting imagery, it is still as real place, embedded in a real neighborhood (albeit a rapidly changing one), with real tensions. The High Line’s context matters. This seems obvious. But when looking at the High Line as an idea that has been mobilized, the flattened and inscribed High Line of discourse and symbol, there is a meaningful gap to be explored. The long, detailed history of the High Line’s abandonment and conversion into a park is not the one that primarily travels. Truth is not really an object of the

High Line's imaginary. A company in New York, called Story Tour in New York, has taken this to an extreme and started offering walking tours that are purposefully and openly embellished (Parker, 2015). One of their most successful runs was "The Secret Architecture of Loss," a fiction-laced tour that took place on the High Line.

What matters in mobilization is not the true but seldom-told deep story about the High Line, but the "origin" story of the High Line, the story that travels. Patsy Healey has argued that the first step to understanding how planning ideas travel and land is to interrogate their "origin stories" (2013, p. 1520). Origin stories, which are part of the inscribed and flattened idea or practice that travels, carry "rationalities or mentalities wrapped up in such stories and the forces which project them into movement" (Healey, 2013, p. 1520). They set the stage for the meaning and power of the concept that travels. Likewise, the urban imaginary of the High Line that travels builds off the origin story. The oft-recounted story of the origins of the High Line goes like this: In 1999 two young men, Robert Hammond and Joshua David met while attending a session of their local Community Board meeting about tearing down the High Line. Inspired to save the mysterious piece of history that ran through their neighborhood and create a unique park, they won a battle of "Davids" over the "Goliath" of the city bureaucracy and real estate industry (La Farge, 2012). They founded Friends of the High Line and, through tireless work and the power of a good idea rooted in community power, they prevailed with a stunning, innovative gem of a public space for the neighborhood. While the truth is far more complex, David and Hammond's hard work and energy have been verified by many of the people involved with the project in various capacities. The hyperbole of the origin story should not diminish their hard work and accomplishments.

Nonetheless, the origin story embodies some of the key points that tend to travel with the idea of the High Line. One is the notion that the High Line was produced in a grassroots way by the community, for the community. A second is that government (and, by association, planners, and policymakers) was unresponsive to the community, instead visionless and aligned with callous developers. A last point is that this was a brilliant innovation that sprung from brilliant minds, which extends the story to its lauded designers and architects for whom the project launched to full starchitect status. These attributes, particularly that of a grassroots, community-lead initiative, play themselves out in the mobilization of the High Line and how it lands in other contexts. Again, in fairness, there is a kernel of truth in each of these points. But, as was covered in greater detail earlier, the truth is more complex and convoluted than that. But the origin story sets the stage; it provides a story that travels with the High Line's other descriptions and images.

Some Contours of the High Line's Traveling Urban Imaginary

The High Line has been an immense global phenomenon that has produced a wealth of discourse, imagery, and more (as of September 20, 2014 a google search for "High Line" + "New York" provides over 8.65 million results). Looking at the wide-reaching global discourse and images that constitute its urban imaginary reveals its contours. The following description is based on an analysis of over 300 items, including, among other things, media reports, blogs, videos, and books. I collected most of these items via a Google Alert over one year between February 2014 and March 2015. Additional items that were linked to and/or referenced in applicable items were added using the snowball approach. As well, I engaged in proactive data collection on the topic and not just those received vis Google Alerts. Although evaluating the whole discourse is far from possible, the sample made its themes or contours are readily apparent. The following are key, common themes that appear and reappear in the popular

discourse and media about the High Line as a place. The contours of the High Line's urban imaginary have been interpreted here in a way that combines overlapping themes and ideas but, as there is no central holder of the one true urban imaginary, it is not possible to claim that they are universal. They are listed in no particular order, and different elements of this urban imaginary are foregrounded or back-grounded depending on what the different transfer agents (broadly speaking) want to emphasize.

A Symbol of a Sustainable, Green City

Sustainability is among the most common threads of the High Line's traveling urban imaginary. This can be credited, in part, to the almost universal contemporary trend in urban development and planning where everything makes de rigueur claims to sustainability, but it also has a more specific basis. The High Line has been crafted as a symbol of sustainability, though sustainability was not a key part of its original vision. Once the project began to gain support and high-profile backers, like Mayor Bloomberg, the High Line began to be promoted as an act and practice of sustainability. In *Designing the High Line*, a book about the design of the High Line that was published before the project was even finished, Bloomberg wrote in a foreword that “[The High Line] represents everything we want New York City to be: bold, innovative, and environmentally sustainable” (Friends of the High Line & Diller Scofidio + Renfro, 2008, p. 9).

Rationale for seeing the High Line as an act of sustainability includes the recycling of old infrastructure, the promoting and easing of alternative transportation (walking), and a general sense that green space in the urban environment must be a de facto act of sustainability. It is estimated that 80 to 90 percent of water that falls on the High Line stays in the park, that all of the material used in its construction is was recyclable or came from sustainable sources, and that the greenery will help with urban carbon reduction (Fehrenbacher, 2014). Corner, one of the

High Line's designers, publicly asserted, "[o]verall, I think it's a very sustainable project" (Fehrenbacher, 2014). The High Line's theme of sustainability pervades its marketing, even extending to the gift shop. In 2014, an FHL spokesperson promoted the "upcycled" Christmas ornaments sold at their gift shop as "turning something that would be discarded into something sophisticated and sweet," which a *New York Times* interpreted as fitting with "the High Line's transformation from disused railroad to popular park" (Mckeough, 2014, p. D3).

As a result, the High Line's imaginary existence now portrays it as a symbol of sustainability. Media and discourse have fully adopted this theme. A popular guidebook to the High Line describes how the park "embodies new ideas about modern urban landscape design and sustainability" (La Farge, 2012, p. 8). Books on sustainability, like *Architecture of Change 2: sustainability and humanity in the built environment*, use the High Line for their cover image and laud it "as a precedent urban park [that] promotes timely and relevant principals of ecological sustainability" (Feireiss & Feireiss, 2009, p. 138). The High Line is included as one of the ideas in *Designed for the Future: 80 Practical Ideas for a Sustainable World* (J. Green, 2015, p. 90). An editor at the Architectural League of New York, in a blog on the *Huffington Post*, praised the High Line for "turning a reminder of a city's industrial past into a pedestrian pathway to its green future" (Shepard, 2014). In fact, sustainability is such a pervasive theme of the High Line's imaginary that an article on local practices to combat global warming, published in the popular news website Salon, uses an untitled image of the High Line as the representative image of the general topic: "sustainability news" (Dooling, 2014). Sustainability is a notoriously difficult to define concept, and the validity of projects' claims to sustainability will not be determined here. The High Line and projects like it can be argued to have sustainable elements, though whether they are exemplary practices of suitability can be reasonably questioned. The

key point here is that one of the contours of the urban imaginary around the High Line is a symbol of a sustainable city.

The Triumph of Grassroots, Community, and Friends

Another key element of the High Line's traveling urban imaginary is the narration of the project as a grassroots, community-driven effort. Despite criticisms by some that this is an overlooked aspect (Inam, 2014), it is in fact one of the most common elements of High Line coverage writ large. In much of the discourse, Hammond and David are lionized as the heroes of the High Line and the community, and are examples of what a grassroots effort can achieve. This imaginary comes largely from the High Line's origin story and is not without its truths. The High Line largely owes its existence to its two founders. And those founders organized around that idea, though how community-oriented they and the project ended up being is an area of continued debate. The imaginary of the High Line's grassroots, non-expert, and non-government nature is accentuated, as it has a certain populist appeal. Moreover, it fits squarely within a contemporary neoliberal narrative that valorizes private community actors. The very name that Friends of the High Line had chosen for itself reinforces this theme. Not only does a private organization to raise money for and operate the High Line fit a contemporary pattern of formerly public functions being taken over by private non-profit organizations, a "friends of" structure implies the oppositional dynamic of something needing a "friend" against some enemy or impediment. The community has come together as friends of the project and against its enemies and competition.

This theme reflects a neoliberal narrative in which the "Friends of" are the drivers of the betterment of the community against what, in the case of the High Line, is often narrated as an initially feckless local government bent to the will of developers. LaFarge, in an early guide to

the High Line, described it as the following: “a classic urban battle ensued, pitting the Davids of preservation against the Goliaths of city bureaucracy. For 10 years the nonprofit group led the fight to save the High Line, arguing against those who considered it an eyesore and — worse — an obstruction to the ancient fine art of real estate development” (La Farge, 2012, p. 10). While it is true that Mayor Giuliani’s city government pushed for the demolition of the High Line, Mayor Bloomberg’s City of New York became a champion and the major funder of reuse. This fact is often backgrounded in the imaginary of the High Line. When government’s role is included in the narrative, it often focuses on the neoliberal darling that is the public-private partnership, such as in the *Toronto Star*, which calls the High Line “a marvel of vision, cooperation” and “a public-private-sector alliance in financing a world-class amenity” (Olive, 2014).

Likewise, the early, productive role of planners and designers almost never comes up in this imaginary. A research paper presented at the 2015 Council on Tall Building and Urban Habitat narrated it as such: “The development of the park was not the idea of a savvy developer, nor of a far-sighted urban planner, but of two neighborhood residents that wanted to save their freight trail viaduct” (Ascher & Uffer, 2015, p. 225). Holl’s early designs for the High Line are occasionally mentioned, but the key role of RPA both for being the most recent generator of the idea and how the FHL’s founders were introduced to it is seldom told. This part of the imaginary also backgrounds the huge private wealth, the elite actors, and the gentrification that were engaged to make this project a reality. The High Line’s imaginary valorizes grass roots, the community, and private pluck over the role of government and formal actors.

Linearity and Reconnecting the City

Linearity and connectivity are key referents for the imaginary of the High Line, which is most often described as a “linear park.” In some discourse, such as that of a writer for the *New*

Statesman, linearity and connections are at the core of the High Line as an imagined place, where “crucially – getting from A to B” is the “usefulness that is at the heart of the triumph” (E. Smith, 2014, p. 56). As well as for movement, many laud it as a tool for connecting neighborhoods. One example is from a commentary in a Los Angeles, California policy and politics publication that emphasizes how the High Line “lubricates the flow of people going in and out of the West Village, Meatpacking District, Chelsea, and New York’s newest emerging market... Hudson Yards” (Cohen, 2014). Most of this discourse does not really explore the deeper notion of “linear”, which is an important and meaning-laden modifier when describing the High Line. This argument It relies on the fact that it is grade separated, not mixed with auto traffic or other impediments, to create a smooth (crowds permitting), seamless flow. Harking back to modernist conception of movement in the city – straight lines, strict separations, and improved speed – the urban imaginary of the High Line plays to new ways of moving through the city and connecting different areas in unbroken flows, separate from traffic and other impediments. Many, including some of its earliest supporters, promote the High Line as a new, safer, more enjoyable way to traverse the city and connect urban areas. A key member of the FHL team has even expressed disappointment that the popular narrative does not stress the auto free space created enough. Its perceived usefulness as transportation is undergirded by its award of a competitive Federal TIGER grant.

In reality, the High Line is not an exceedingly helpful way to move across the Lower West Side. It is certainly a nice walk, and there are some anecdotal stories of children using it to walk to school, unharmed by traffic, and of people enjoying a morning stroll to work. But it is not primarily a transportation infrastructure in purpose or use, and compared to the very walkable Manhattan grid it is a rather modest transportation improvement. The design

purposefully tries to slow visitors down and, if it does not, the frequent crowds will. The High Line in practice, however, is not the point here. What is important is that the High Line is imagined as a vital linear movement device for the future of urbanism.

A Center of Fashion, Art, and Design

The traveling urban imaginary of the High Line builds upon its New York location and its specific context concerning fashion, art, and design. Articles in fashion and design magazines use the High Line as a site for photospreads and interviews, and fashion and celebrity events that take place at the High Line get international coverage in newspapers, magazines, and blogs. The always star-studded summer fundraisers on the High Line that sponsored by the high end fashion brand Coach, for example, is covered in a variety of outlets, such as *Town and Country*, *The Globe and Mail* (Canada) and the *Wall Street Journal* (Bryant, 2016; Hearst Simonds, 2014). As another example, the *New York Times* Style section posted an online video of interviews with people on the High Line about their fashion styles (Tsonopoulous, Nikas, & Osipova, n.d.). Not only did this indicate that the High Line is a site of fashion in a city already considered a center of fashion, it spread this indication to other sources, such as the Malay Mail Online, which reposted the video for its readers (“Intersection: High Line break time (VIDEO),” 2014).

The foundational role of art in the reuse of the High Line also contributes to the fashion, art, and design aspect of the imaginary. News of its high profile rotating exhibits makes international news through various outlets. The design and designers of the High Line, by relation, are a key topic of discourse, as the High Line’s peel-up benches, pavers, and other design elements are frequently mentioned. The designers, primarily Corner, DS+R, and to a lesser degree Oudolf are held up as leaders of the future of design, as well, and the starchitects of the buildings being constructed around the High Line are increasingly included.

The imaginary that travels of the High Line’s fashion, art, and design is that of a leading place in a chic world city milieu. There is much truth to this imaginary. But it condenses the High Line into an almost singular experience: a pulsing world of fashion, art, and design that exists as a separate domain from a real, multifaceted, and somewhat more everyday place. The High Line’s sense of cool, of fashion and high design (and attendant high society) is an important part of its imaginary that has been disseminated and accepted – one that is rooted in truths about its existence but certainly foregrounds much about it that is not a real part of the experience for most of its many visitors.

A Catalyst of Rebirth, Revitalization, and Urban Modernity

Overwhelmingly, the traveling urban imaginary of the High Line is one of revitalization and dramatic redevelopment into a new form of modern urbanity. As one writer put it in England’s *Financial Times*, “[A] defunct amenity, long considered a strip of urban blight, has become an engine of regeneration. Its rebirth has spawned a boom in development along its length and its environs have become the city’s most extraordinary architectural showcase” (Heathcote, 2009). The High Line’s reputation for taking a (often overstatedly) grimy and devastated neighborhood and converting it into a bustling, active locale is a core part of its narrative that travels. As described earlier, the area around the High Line went from a rather prosaic neighborhood of industrial uses, auto shops, and other less vaunted activities to an epicenter of chic, filled with high end boutiques, brasseries, bars, and hotels. The traveling urban imaginary turns receiving sites (where a High Line-like project would land in other contexts) into a centerpiece of a neighborhood full of new development in the same way, with a renewed vigor and energy. Or, as one writer succinctly put it, for developers “the term High Line is real-estate gold dust” (E. Smith, 2014, p. 56).

Often, discourse about the High Line treats the specifics of revitalization in a blanket way – an image derived from an amorphous Manhattan vitality. Manhattan is a long standing worldwide symbol of modern urbanism (Lindner, 2015), and the High Line has become a leading prop for the current worldwide drama, in which Manhattan is the place that “other cities will both envy and try to emulate” (Rykwert, 2000, p. 189). But the High Line’s traveling urban imaginary also holds interest in the many cases that the High Line is heralded as bringing about something new – a refurbished modern urbanism, at least aesthetically. This is the “urban revolution.” The theme of linearity plays into this, as a new way of moving through the neighborhood is understood broadly as a new type of urban experience. Likewise, the themes of industrial heritage and preservation, which are central to the story of the High Line, also intersect in this part of the imaginary. It brings about a new city by “repurposing outdated infrastructure for current requirements” (Peters, 2016).

There is some truth to this overall theme of the imaginary, though in reality it is mostly aesthetic changes. The High Line is far from the first structure of its type to be reused as an amenity that fits the new needs and requirements of urban life. The most substantial change is the surrounding architecture, which, as covered earlier, is far more experimental and bold than most of the rest of Manhattan. Overall, the sense of a neighborhood reinvigorated with new physical urbanism ties into the Landscape Urbanism tack that the High Line has created a new type of urbanism. No longer a park, the High Line has instead morphed into a symbol of a type of urbanism: an imagined place of the urban future, which transforms the old city into the future one. It fits into a larger context of what Short has called a “global city imaginary,” where citizens of various cities embrace the production of symbols that connect them to an imagery of being in

a modern, global city (Short, 2012, p. 114). Though this is a large overreach in the case of the High Line, the associated, mobilized imaginary is fetching.

A Site of Innovation and Disruption

Tying into the notion of a new, modern urbanism is the notion of the High Line as innovation. It is frequently described as an innovation in public space, a product of new thinking about public space and revitalization, and the result of innovative efforts at urban progress. Part of the High Line's traveling urban imaginary is the idea of innovation and disruption. Or, as one of DS+R's architects put it to an international design publication, "The High Line park created a series of new paradigms. It repositioned New York as the most innovative urban city since the development of the skyscraper" ("Architecture as an art form: an interview with Gaspar Libedinsky," 2014). While the High Line's level of innovation is debatable due to precedents like the Promenade Plantée and even some of the modernist conceptions of the city that precede it, most people consider its innovation a foregone conclusion. To most, it is a new type of urbanism that disrupts the current paradigm of cities. There is some truth to this, as the High Line has both had a significant impact on urban redevelopment practices and does reassert a focus on flow in a period where much of the focus has been on place and "place making." But in practice, this is an overstated physical and experiential impact and is mostly aesthetic. Still, to visitors who enter the dream world that is the High Line and to those who hear nothing but the dreamy tales about it, its imaginary is one of exciting innovation and disruption of the staid city.

A Mobilized "High Line"

That the High Line travels is clear, and will be made more so as its "descendants" are further examined. It is a well-known urban project – a global sensation. But how and what of the High Line travels is important. The High Line is mobilized not just through well-studied formal

and semi-formal networks for policy actors and policy tourists as a policy idea and model. It largely travels more diffused and broad contemporary mobilization, which is spread through a wide range of mediums and sources to an even wider range of consumers. In a neoliberal era that often valorizes “grassroots” ideas from “the community” over those offered by governments and formal actors, this broad reach is very relevant. The High Line has legitimacy as an idea not just because it is interpreted as a solution that works, but also because it is seen as something innovative that was produced by plucky community activists. This legitimacy gives practice more weight in the current socio-political environment. And then, as discussed later, when the High Line-like project is adopted by the “community” in which it lands, this process of legitimization is replicated.

The concept of a traveling urban imaginary puts an emphasis on how many urban revitalization ideas and practices *really* travel, at least in the case of large and symbolic schemes like the High Line. This is not to discount the still important role of experts, governments, and formal networks, which still play key roles and are undoubtedly still part of the mobilization dynamic. But the way the High Line has been put in motion does not necessarily incorporate the technical-rational formalism that experts, policy professionals, and other traditional actors would, at least putatively, imbue into policy transfer. Instead, the High Line’s mobilized urban imaginary, which has spread largely through internet discourse and media to an enormous range of people and places, invites probing the conceptions and aspirations of urbanism that are widely sought in cities around the world. While certainly a bit of a hyperbole, the notion that the High Line has “sparked an urban revolution” is also certainly true. It has invigorated support and excitement for existing projects, focused attention on sites and structures formerly thought of as impediments to revitalization, and generally shaped perspectives on urban revitalization

priorities and actions around the world. The dreams and aspirations that flow with the imaginary around this “revolution” play a role in planning and political processes that produce built environments and allocate resources. In an era of “austerity urbanism” (Peck, 2012) what does garner public investment, or at least public excitement for it, is an important object of study.

Furthermore, this analysis should prove useful for the critical examination of mobilized ideas and policies, current and future. The concept of a traveling urban imaginary emphasizes the notion that mobilized ideas and policies are not neutral and rational, but are constructed narratives and aspirations. Additionally, the High Line’s imaginary should be deeply interrogated in order to understand what captures attention and shapes support. It also should encourage clearer thinking about how such an imaginary fits local needs. How do we know if a High Line is the right urban revitalization intervention for another place or how much mutation (as in adapting the idea or practice to a new context) would justify its implementation? There is no clear way to know and this must, inevitably, be worked through project by project. But demystifying the allure of such traveling imaginaries like the High Line’s should go a long way toward clarifying these conversations.

Chapter VI “Ancestors” and “Descendants”: A High Line Family Tree

Rykwert (2000) and Linder (2015), among others, have persuasively argued that New York attracts the gaze of the world. This is nothing new. New York has been recognized, both by others and itself, as a beacon of modern innovation for nearly 150 years. In 1899, the book *The New Metropolis* boasted, “Nearly all the great inventions which have revolutionized the commerce of the world have had their inception or completion in New York” (Zeisloft, 1899, p. IV).

Formed in New York and therefore under the world’s gaze, the High Line traveled through formal channels. It was packaged as an innovation and a smart policy, but also, and more importantly, as a dreamy imaginary that was shaping the visions of urbanity around the world. As Bender argues,

[c]ities are increasingly aware of existing in a global gaze, seeing their fate in the perception of that gaze. Whether or not the world (meaning mostly the North Atlantic investment communities) is in fact looking, their presumed gaze is part of the urban imaginary in our global era. (2007, p. 273)

Actors in cities around the world, aware of this gaze, began adopting or reenergizing specific types of projects in the wake of the High Line’s internationally touted success.

Because it is a global icon of success, creating an association with the High Line has become an important device for cities and projects. Cities can signal their desire to be “world class” by embracing similar practices as the one in Manhattan, a leading global icon of urbanism

(Rykwert, 2000), and developing an established sign of contemporary urban accomplishment like the High Line. Association with the High Line – and thus adoption of its meaning, purpose, and perceived chances of success – legitimizes projects in the marketplace of ideas, as well. The High Line, or something claiming to be like it, has now entered the canon of “what works” (Campbell, 2002) in urban revitalization practice, both at a policy level and in more general discourse. Projects that claim similarities also claim to be part of what works, which gives them additional legitimacy in the battle of ideas and increases their likelihood of gaining limited resources.

As mentioned earlier, Guggenheim Bilbao provides a prime example of this influencing dynamic at work. Upon its opening and even before, the Guggenheim Bilbao was heralded as a success: a new, must-see urban attraction that inspired other cities. It has been recognized as one of the leading urban redevelopment practices of the last two decades (e.g., Gomez, 1998; Gonzalez, 2010; McNeill, 2012). The Bilbao effect’s reach has been global, with cities around the world emulating the practice – so much that today the creation of a high-design cultural institution to catalyze revitalization is considered standard urban practice.

In a similar fashion, soon after the High Line’s successful opening in 1999, the news media began to cover how it was influencing urban redevelopment and revitalization practices and ideas around the world. One of the earliest examples of this phenomenon appeared on the front page of the *New York Times* not long after the first phase of the High Line opened to massive crowds. Reporter Kate Taylor identified how the project’s success had encouraged “other cities to look up”:

The High Line’s success, its improbable evolution from old trestle into glittering urban amenity, has motivated a whole host of public officials and city planners to consider or

revisit efforts to convert relics from their own industrial past into potential economic engines. (2010b, p. A1)

In the article, Taylor describes how interested developers, planners, and city officials from such disparate places as Rotterdam, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Jerusalem sought to understand the High Line as a model for their own cities. As covered earlier, these policy tourists came to New York to see the park for themselves and, in many cases, to learn from various local actors. A project manager from James Corner Field Operations, the lead landscape architect of the High Line, marveled that giving tours to interested parties from around the world could be a full-time job in itself (Taylor, 2010b, p. A28). Taylor's article specifically identified the Embankment in Jersey City, New Jersey; the Reading Viaduct in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and the Bloomingdale Trail (now called the 606) in Chicago, Illinois as active projects inspired by the success of the High Line. Notably, each of the projects identified is specifically disused and elevated (on berm and/or viaduct) rail infrastructure.

In a similar vein, a later article by Eric Jaffe (2011) in *Citylab* identified the “descendants of the High Line.” Calling them “High-Line style parks in progress,” Jaffe listed the same projects as Taylor plus The Trestle in St. Louis, Missouri; he also mentioned the Promenade Plantée in Paris, France, a preexisting elevated linear park, as a “precursor.” Both additions are elevated rail viaducts as well. These two articles are good, early examples of interest in the High Line as its model spread around the world. Importantly, Taylor and Jaffe primarily identify projects that are typologically similar to the High Line – projects seeking to reuse abandoned elevated rail infrastructure in central city areas.

Following this, more articles in a variety of outlets started to identify additional and different High Line-related projects. For example, Vanessa Quirk (2012), in an article that

appeared in *Arch Daily* and was reposted in the *Huffington Post*, wrote about “The 4 Coolest ‘High Line’ Inspired Projects.” Widening the field, Quirk included the “Lego Bridge” in Wuppertal, Germany; the Hofbogen in Rotterdam, the Netherlands; the new Transbay Transit Center in San Francisco, California; and the Delancy Underground (now the Lowline) in New York City. Lego Bridge and the Hofbogen are both predicated on elevated rail infrastructure. However, the Delancy Underground is neither linear nor elevated (in fact, it’s underground), and the Transbay Transit Center is a rooftop park on top of a new building with no post-industrial or historic rail infrastructure; while rectangular overall, it is so wide that it stretches the notion of a “linear” park. Six months later, an article in *Untapped Cities* by Nancy Li (2013) identified “10 Plans for Elevated ‘High Line’ Parks Around the World.” Here, while all have the element of former rail use, a number of the projects identified are simple, at-grade pathways that would typically be considered common greenways coming out of the larger rails-to-trails movement.

Over time, more and more articles opened up what might qualify as a type of “High Line,” adding an array of potential typologies and relationships. Bridges, rooftops, and proposed new structures began to make the cut. Pondering the next High Line or a city’s “answer” to the High Line also became a theme (e.g., Hohenadel, 2013; Reuben, n.d.). For example, a “High Line fever” has hit Britain (Richardson, 2012), and in London having a High Line became a kind of obsession. In 2012, the Landscape Institute sponsored a “High Line for London” competition, which received over one hundred entries for potential projects around the city and embraced a wide variety of typologies. Likewise, numerous local media outlets published articles and blogs cataloguing potential sites for a High Line-like project in London, with the website *Londonist* assessing the feasibility and likelihood of completion for each one (Nicholas, 2012). An unknown user even mapped 12 “Possible London ‘High Lines’” on Google Maps (“Possible

London ‘High Lines ,’” n.d.). Although London is a particularly robust example, other cities, particularly New York City, Philadelphia, and even Miami, have become hotbeds of enthusiasm for the next “High Lines.”

Not only has there been widespread and keen interest in identifying existing and future “High Lines,” but there has also been interest in identifying its precursors or “ancestors.” An article in *CityMetric*, for example, covered “All the parks the High Line copied” and listed all “the precursors we’ve found so far” (CityMetric staff, 2015). Three parks were listed, with only one an elevated railway converted to a park. It included a verified precedent, the Promenade Plantée in Paris, France, and two other pre-existing projects in London, England that have only very basic typological similarities to the High Line (one linear and rails-to-trails, the other elevated and linear) with no verified direct connection. The article ends with the following request: “As ever, drop us a line if you know of any other High Line ancestors or pretenders.” This connects back to Jaffe’s metaphor of “descendants,” implying a kind of genealogical way of looking at the High Line phenomenon. It underscores the public fascination with, and therefore the practical importance of, the High Line’s relationship to other projects around the world.

A High Line “Family Tree”

The genealogical frame for the ancestors and descendants of the High Line is an important, if ill-fitting, metaphor. It reflects not only the age-old human fascination with categories and relationships, but also the production of narratives, understandings, and hierarchies about the High Line phenomenon that extend beyond the west side of Manhattan. Or, put otherwise, it speaks to how the High Line as a phenomenon travels and influences urban design and development practices around the world. Building on the genealogical metaphor, this chapter creates a kind of “High Line Family Tree.” The goal is to map out the reach of the High

Line and discover what information can be gleaned from the various projects that have been associated with it.

The application of a family tree model to concepts in urban planning and development is far from new or novel. Kaiser and Godschalk (1995) mapped out a family tree of land use planning, developing a framework with “idea genes” that transfer into new branches. By looking at over a century of land use planning, they trace the evolution of land use planning and its growing complexity. However, their work does not provide the typical detail and hierarchy generally expected in a family tree, in part because the interconnection of ideas can be difficult to pin down precisely enough to develop definitive connections and lineages. Kaiser and Godshalk’s (1995, p. 367) tree has only three branches, with a large canopy generally representing current hybrids and a large trunk with extra roots leading directly to the canopy.

Likewise, a genealogical framework is far from a perfect way to look at the relationships between the High Line and related projects. The High Line is not a biological thing, and descendants, ancestors, and all metaphors of genealogy are difficult to map. Relationships are not governed by even the broadest rules of genetics and heritage. Also, determining the genesis of a project and its age of inception, which is key to understanding a more traditional genealogical relationship, is extremely difficult for such a large number of potential projects. It is impossible to produce a clean, hierarchical chart of the High Line Family. Nonetheless, an effort to parse the High Line’s “ancestors” and “descendants” into groups and associations does help reveal some of the contours of the phenomenon. To do this, an analysis that categorizes the members of the family by temporality and typology proves to be most useful.

Finding and Categorizing the Members of the High Line Family Tree

Identifying members of the High Line family tree begins with the tricky task of deciding just what qualifies as a High Line. As I discuss in more detail later, one approach is to examine the different ideas and movements of urban planning and design, such as greenways, rails-to-trails, industrial heritage preservation and others that intellectually undergird the project. Placing the phenomenon in a historical framework of ideas is an important part of understanding it. Yet this approach is an academic exercise that does not necessarily reveal the wider public's understanding of what a High Line is. In order to get a sense of the contemporary popular understanding of what constitutes a "High Line," a form of discourse analysis is helpful. Maarten Hajer defines discourse "as a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts and categorizations that are produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities" (1995, p. 44). A landscape, such as the High Line, takes on layers of meaning that are expressed as a kind of discourse. In their introduction to *The Iconography of Landscape: Essay on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, Daniels and Cosgrove begin by emphasizing the importance of discourse in understanding landscapes: "To understand a built landscape . . . it is usually necessary to understand written and verbal representations of it, not as 'illustrations,' images standing outside it, but as constituent images of its meaning or meanings" (1988, p. 1). Building on these insights, one key way to look at the High Line as a global phenomenon is to consider what people understand or assert it to be in popular discourse. Therefore, one way to develop a wider understanding of the relationships – or the family tree – of the High Line is to map the landscape of projects associated with it around the world.

To achieve this, I collected a sample of projects described as related to the High Line. The collection of ostensible High Line family tree members began with a Google Alert for “High Line” on April 19, 2013. All results included the mention of the “High Line” and were then screened for the assertion of a related project. Alerts included both single and multiple projects. I also added alerts for the early descendants identified by Taylor and Jaffee. From there, I employed a snowball approach, examining leads forwarded by others and sources I otherwise happened upon when working on the project. The total collection period covered three years and ended on May 23, 2016, resulting in a robust sample of the discursively generated landscape of the High Line’s family tree. Because the potential universe of projects that may be associated with the High Line is so large (at the end of the collection period, a Google search for “High Line” returned over 10.4 million results), this method provides a useful illustration of the discourse but a far-from-exhaustive list of projects.

Using Google Alerts for “High Line” to find sources that mentioned other projects was a good start – by default, the provided source associated the High Line with another project in some way. However, simply being mentioned in conjunction with the High Line was insufficient grounds to include a project; for that, the source had to assert a direct association between the project and the High Line in New York. For example, a travel article in *The Guardian* asserted that a new, elevated addition to the Kerry Cycle Route is “Ireland’s answer to New York’s High Line” (MacMonagle, 2015). Other common examples include the description of a project as ‘like the High Line’ or as ‘a High Line for x city’ and the assertion that the ‘High Line inspired x project.’ Occasionally subtler assertions required some judgment in determining a relationship, but most sources made a clear assertion.

Sources for assertions consisted primarily of news media (newspapers, magazines, etc. that have an online presence), blogs, and other websites. However, reports, video, and other media were also included. Assertions had to be made in the body of the source; public comments that made the association (which were prevalent but harder to assemble and not regularly included in Google Alerts) did not qualify. The purpose was to get a broad sense of how the High Line is associated with projects around the world in a wide public discourse without making judgments about the validity of these assertions. Likewise, I make no claim that everyone, or even those most directly involved in the identified projects, would consider the assertion of a connection to the High Line fully valid.

All results were assembled into a database, with one exception: I excluded many potential descendants discovered for London, England. As mentioned earlier, the Landscape Institute sponsored “A High Line for London” competition, which generated 170 entries – nearly equal the total number of projects identified worldwide. However, most of these numerous and quite wide-ranging projects did not garner mentions in media or discourse. Inclusion of all the “A High Line for London” competition projects would have skewed the sample toward the concepts of the designers in the competition (and the guidelines of the competition) and away from wider notions of the High Line as a global phenomenon. I included only those projects from the competition that I found outside of the competition website and in media, blogs, and other sources via the snowball method.

Projects in the sample were recorded with name, city, country, and a short description. After identifying the descendants, I began to categorize the assembled projects. Varying degrees of information on each project were available, and additional investigation was necessary for most projects. The first categorization was an association type: ‘compare’ or ‘inspired or

bolster.’ This categorization gives a temporal dimension to the family tree. As discussed later, determining the projects’ origins was frequently difficult, and there was no reliable way to record the sequential dimension of this family tree for such a broad range of descendants. In most cases, a date establishing the genesis of the project was not readily available – and such a date is hard to determine for any project, even the High Line. Instead, I employed a simple and verifiable dichotomy. Projects categorized as ‘compare’ preexisted the first phase of the High Line and are essentially being compared to the High Line. This also means that, in some sense, they are potential ancestors of the High Line. Projects categorized as ‘inspired or bolster’ were not physically under construction or completed before completion of the first phase of the High Line. The choice of terms in this association type points to the uncertainty for most projects – were they inspired by the High Line, or were they bolstered by its success? In some cases, this is clear. Additional research showed no previous plans for one example, The Trestle, in St. Louis, Missouri. It appears to be directly inspired by the High Line as an idea and project. In another example, however, the 606 in Chicago (formerly the Bloomingdale Trail) was a pre-existing project proposal that was invigorated by the perceived success of the High Line, despite some incorrect reports by a handful of media sources.

After I assembled a list of projects that discourse associated with the High Line as either ancestors or descendants, the next step was to further develop the family tree hierarchy by typological characteristics. To categorize the family tree, I evaluated each project in relation to six of the core typological characteristics of the High Line. These six characteristics represent fundamental aspects of the High Line as a real, physical place and are also commonly used to describe it in popular discourse. Using available information (which included additional searches

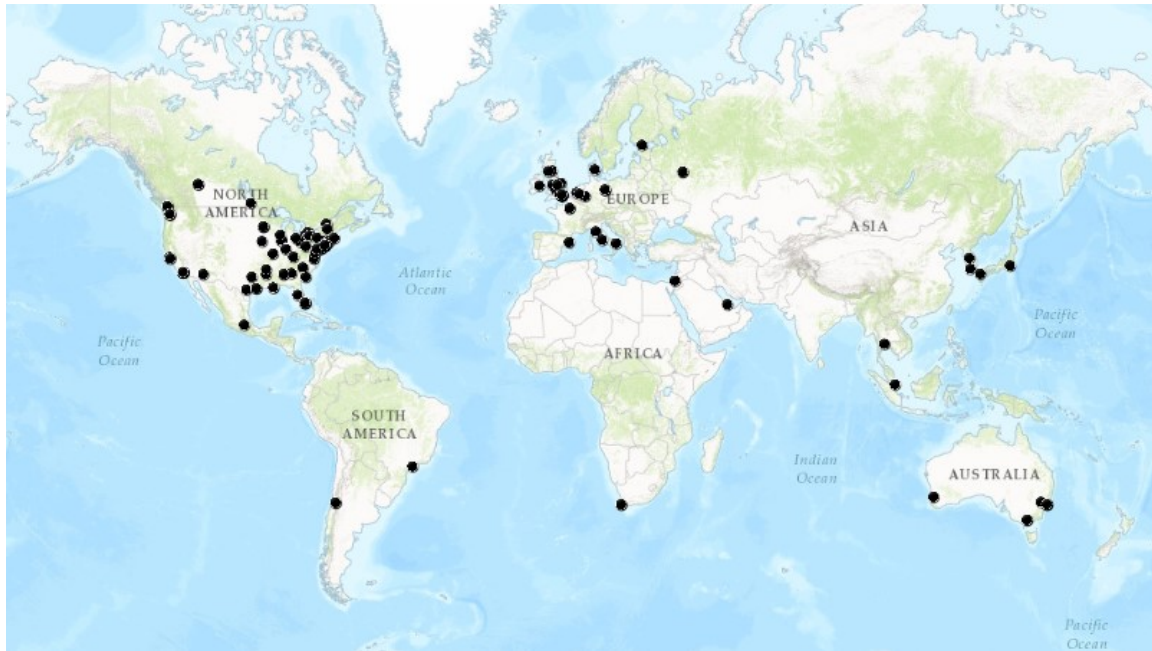
for information about the site or project), I assigned each project a score per typological characteristic: 1 = yes, 2 = mixed, and 3 = no.

The first typological characteristic is *linearity*. The High Line's core defining physical typological feature is that it is a linear space, and "linear park" is one of the most common descriptions of the project. Linearity, therefore, may be its most fundamental physical attribute as a structure. The second typological characteristic is *elevation*, which is a core physical attribute of the High Line as a place. Likewise, many descriptions of what makes the High Line unique mention that it is an elevated space, which sets it apart from most linear parks or greenways. The third key characteristic, which is clearly typologically aligned with its physical characteristic of linearity, is its connection to *rail use*. The fact that the High Line uses a former rail viaduct, incorporates rail artifacts, and alludes to rail history in much of its marketing, is central to the narrative and design of the project. The fourth characteristic is *reuse*. The High Line is, famously, a project that reuses an existing, once-disused structure. The fifth characteristic is *industrial heritage and preservation*. Related to reuse, the High Line is well understood as the reuse of not just any structure, but a historic structure that plays off its industrial past as part of its grand narrative. The sixth characteristic is *urban context*. The High Line cuts through a densely urban area of Manhattan, and its surroundings are inextricable from what makes it a unique and popular place. As "urban" is difficult to define, this characteristic required more judgment. If the project was in a central city area or in otherwise dense urban fabric, it received a score of 1. Difficult-to-score places with continuous, dense sprawl, like Los Angeles, CA, were also scored as urban (1). Projects located within suburban fabric and projects that included multiple contexts were scored 2. Rural projects were scored 3.

After categorizing each project by typology, I calculated a total score and assigned each project a “wave” based on how closely it adheres to the core characteristics of the High Line. A score of 6 was the closest match to the High Line. Scores of 6 and 7 were assigned to wave one, scores of 8-13 were assigned to wave two, and scores of 14-18, the least similar projects, were assigned to wave three. A project that scored a 3 (no) on the characteristic of linearity was automatically assigned to wave three. As discussed earlier, linearity is the key physical characteristic of the High Line, and the lack of at least partial linearity makes a project a major mutation from the High Line’s core concept. At the end of this categorization process, a picture of the High Line family tree with temporal and typological traits dimensions emerged.

Results

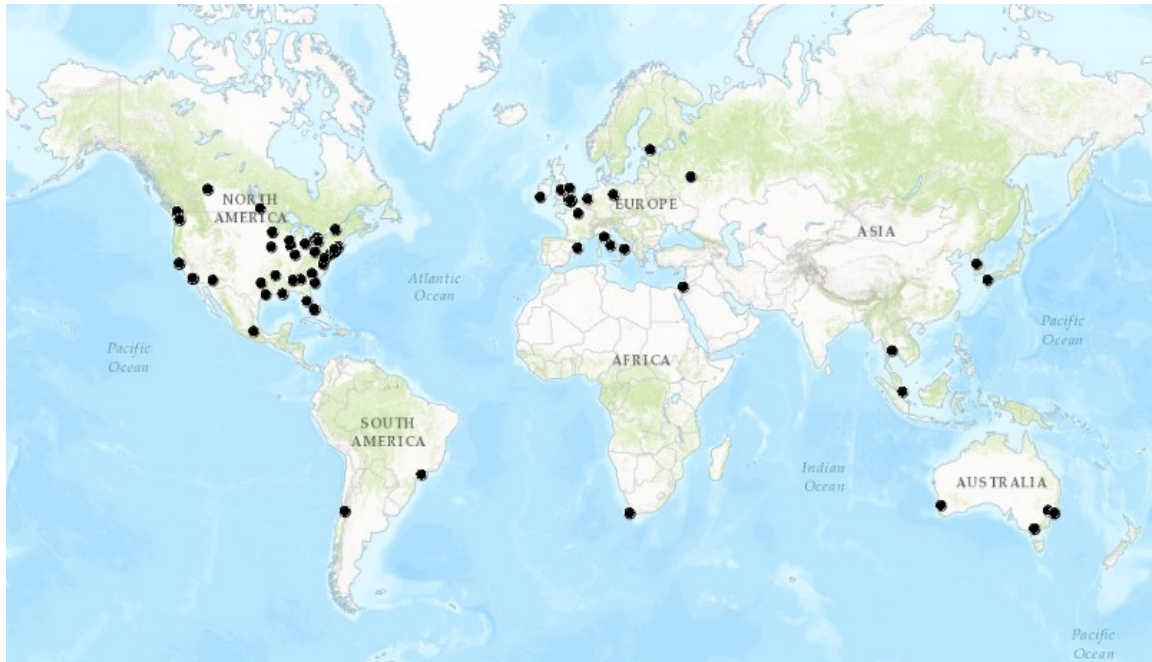
As of the final collection on May 23, 2016, 183 projects were identified (see Appendix). They are located in all six inhabited continents, across 23 nations (all projects in the United Kingdom were considered from one country) and 84 cities/locations (see Map 1). The city of the project is categorized by its commonly referred to metropolitan area – at least as much as was discernible – and one project was not in a metropolitan area at all. The nations with the most projects are the United States (90), the U.K. (32), and Canada (20). The cities with the most projects are London (22), New York (17), Los Angeles and Toronto (10 each), and Miami (7) (see Map 2).



MAP 1: ALL PROJECTS



MAP 2: WAVE 1 PROJECTS



MAP 3: WAVE 2 PROJECTS



MAP 4: WAVE 3 PROJECTS

Categorized by association type, less than 10% of the projects sampled were considered ‘compare’ (16), while the majority were ‘inspired or bolster’ (167) (see Table 2). All of the compare projects are in Europe and North America, except for one in Fukuoka, Japan. A little

less than 20% of projects were in wave one (34) and were typologically very similar to the High Line (see Table 3). Of these 34, 24 of the wave one projects had a total score of 6, which means they were very typologically like the High Line. These first-wave projects are primarily in the United States (13) and the U.K. (11), and all except two are in North America and Europe (see Map 2). These wave one projects are mostly a mix of rails-to-trails conversion projects (existing and proposed), using elevated and mixed-elevation routes through urban areas. Wave one includes all the projects identified by Taylor and Jaffee, plus others that are primarily in post-industrial cities. Four of the first-wave projects preexisted the High Line (compare), including the Promenade Plantée, in Paris, France, which is recognized as a precedent (though not the inspiration) for the High Line. Since there are a total of 34 projects, the percentage of predecessor projects in the first wave is surprisingly small.

TABLE 2: ASSOCIATION TYPES AND WAVES

Association Type	Number of Projects
Compare	16
Inspired or Bolster	167
Wave	
First	34
Second	117
Third	32

Over 60% of the projects were in wave two (116), which means they were linear or mixed linear and scored 1 or 2 on most typological characteristics (see Map 3). Likewise, 11, or more than half, of the compare association type were in wave two. Wave two projects had the widest geographic reach, though they are still most heavily clustered in Europe and North America (see Map 3). Wave three contains the remaining 32 projects. It has a slightly wider geographic distribution than wave one, though it is overall quite similar (see Map 4).

Interestingly, the projects this phase are most heavily clustered in the Northeast of North America.

161 of the 183 projects scored a 1 (yes) on the characteristic of linearity, reinforcing the argument that it is a central characteristic of the High Line (see Table 3). Approximately half of the projects (90) also scored a 1 on elevation, but a rather significant number (64) were not elevated at all. On the other hand, the majority of projects (106) had no connection to rail. This means that most projects are not part of the rails-to-trails movement writ large, and the rail use typological characteristic is surprisingly weak relative to its centrality in the High Line’s design and narrative. Reuse is featured in the third-highest number of projects (117) that score a 1, after linearity, though a significant number of projects (54) do not touch on reuse at all. This indicates that reuse is central theme, but less than might be expected given the emphasis on that characteristic in the High Line’s redevelopment narratives. Industrial heritage and preservation had the lowest number of projects (71) scoring a 1 and the highest (108) scoring a 3. It appears that this is far less of an industrial heritage and preservation phenomenon than might be expected from the common narrative of the High Line. Lastly, the characteristic with the highest number of projects (167) scoring a 1 was urban context. This was in many ways the most difficult characteristic to score, but it is clear that the High Line phenomenon is overwhelmingly an urban one.

TABLE 3: TYPOLOGY SCORES

Typological Characteristic	Scored #1 (yes)	Scored #2 (mixed)	Scored #3 (no)
Linear	161	12	10
Elevated	90	29	64
Rail	72	5	106
Reuse	117	12	54
Industrial Heritage and Preservation	71	4	108
Urban Context	167	10	6

The Outline of a High Line Family Tree

While the above results do not create a typical hierarchical family tree, rendering the landscape of the High Line's descendants and ancestors helps provide some insights into the phenomenon. With 183 associated projects catalogued, the High Line as an idea, inspiration, justification, or positive association has been rather prolific – and the number of ancestors, while a small fraction of the total projects, confirms the desire for a post hoc association with the High Line. As I discuss in more detail below, there is truth to the notion that ancestors exist not just as precedents, but also as parts of movements containing the central idea that do have a legitimate association. Still, the claim that a project is “like” the High Line is a weak one, and it typically comes from someone primarily looking to bask in the glow of the High Line's success.

The bulk of the projects studied were inspired or bolstered by the High Line, and the sample contains a remarkable number of projects. It confirms not only that the High Line travels as an idea and an imaginary, but also that the phenomenon is having an outsized impact on the potential choices and practices of other cities around the world. The impact of the High Line as a phenomenon on potential urban interventions in a wide range of cities cannot be ignored. Furthermore, mapping the phenomenon shows a truly global reach. The unfolding of this reach in the three waves shows a progression of the phenomenon from major post-industrial cities to rather unlikely places around the globe. Unsurprisingly, wave one projects, hewing closest to the High Line typologically, are primarily in places that have post-industrial infrastructure waiting to be reused. There were surprisingly few ancestors (only four with compare associations) in this wave. Even though the High Line undoubtedly springs in part from the greenways and rails-to-trails movements, it seems that it was as unique a manifestation as its proponents claim (though it was not the first park of its kind).

This first wave highlights the more orthodox movement of the High Line as a specific model to be copied or to bolster existing ideas. But the second wave, by the far the largest, shows a desire to extend the bounds of this model, to enlarge the ability to claim association with the High Line. The success of the High Line has been translated into support for broader forms of projects that can retain this association. It also confirms that linearity and urban context are the key underlying (genetic) traits of the phenomenon. To have a High Line is, in many respects, to develop a linear park in an urban context. That may be the core DNA of the High Line as a discursively constructed phenomenon, and the threshold for association. It is also a sign of how little the High Line's details actually matter to the phenomenon writ large.

Relatedly, the third wave is in many ways the most fascinating – how the High Line has mutated into an idea that encompasses so many projects. In this wave, typological similarities with the High Line have been stretched significantly, yet it is still nearly 20% of the total projects identified. This provides additional support for the notion that, localism movements aside, cities continue to fight for attention on what Monica Degen calls “the global catwalk” (Degen, 2003) by adopting something that they can claim to associate with world-class, global acceptance. The projects they adopt are only loosely modeled after the High Line but are, more broadly, its ideas and imaginaries. To return to the genealogical metaphor, the apple *does* fall far from the tree in the High Line phenomenon. Still, most of these third-wave projects are not in far-flung, latecomer, off-the-map locales, as might be expected. Rather, they cluster in northeastern North America, where the High Line phenomenon began, and may in fact be the early signs of a very different wave of competition for the spotlight with high-design, eye-catching urban parks far removed from anything but the general notion of the High Line as a catalyst of perceived urban revitalization success.

More temporal detail would help improve the clarity of the family tree, but such an effort may be problematic given the nature of ideas – there is no definitive way to confirm when and how a traveling idea or practice is transferred. But looking at the contours of the High Line family tree reveals its depth and breadth as a mobilized phenomenon. It also underscores that such phenomena are far more fluid in terms of mutations and adaptations to new contexts than theorized in traditional diffusion models and some of the policy-transfer literature. The contemporary High Line phenomenon supports McCann’s and Ward’s conclusion that places “have increasingly been pitched into competition with one another and are, therefore, compelled to look to shape new innovative – and quickly and cheaply workable – ‘solutions’ to local programs by assembling the packaged models in combinations suited for their particular places” (2012, p. 330). The High Line, mutated to its core characteristics through association, has become fodder for the machine of the global imaginary and a referent for solutions to urban revitalization. Of course, it holds this position only until the next big thing creates a new family tree.

Chapter VII Ancestors, Origins, and Origin Stories

The family tree, or more precisely a ‘pedigree chart,’ provides insights into the mobilized High Line phenomenon. It shows what a High Line is understood to be within a wide discourse and the length of its reach as a phenomenon, as well as its range of mutation and its flexibility as a concept. However, a full understanding of the mobilization and spread of the High Line phenomenon requires a closer look, and probing the concept of “ancestors” is a good first step. As the *CityMetric* article on the High Line’s ‘ancestors and pretenders’ implies, examining the High Line’s predecessors and inspiration is more than an academic exercise; it is a topic of interest to a wider public. This interest is, in part, predicated on claims to authenticity, credit, and rank. It is about asserting dues to what were the “pretenders” versus the authentic ancestors. Authentic ancestors represent a project and place that was ahead of the curve, and early adopters of an idea in the vein of the High Line ostensibly deserve credit for being innovative and forward looking. These authentic, innovative, and, inspiring ancestors of the High Line, one of the world’s most successful and envied contemporary urban projects, can claim an elevated rank in the world of cities vying for status.

What are the High Line’s authentic ancestors? As the ideas, concepts and/or policies it is predicated on are mobilized, travel and mutate – with no physical union or immutable traits like DNA – there is no way to fully settle that issue. This parallels “Galton’s problem” in the field of anthropology. Sir Francis Galton questioned cross-cultural research that showed common traits among cultures, claiming it was not possible to know if these were natural social progressions or

the results of sharing via previous contact (Ross & Homer, 1976). The ancestors of the High Line are often framed as part of a teleological progression of parks or greenways. But as ideas are fluid and contact between places is wide ranging, it is impossible to fully verify such a dynamic.

Though this problem cannot be definitively resolved, the desire to track the origins of the High Line and related projects is really about developing the arguments framing them. These arguments lead us to a key distinction in this discussion: the High Line's "origins" versus its "origin stories." Origins describe the real, concrete derivation of the High Line as an idea and phenomenon. They can be identified, but never settled. However, the tales that have developed around its origins, or what Patsy Healy calls "origin stories," are more important to understanding the nature of the High Line phenomenon than its actual origins.

Healey has argued that a key first step to understanding how planning ideas travel and land is to interrogate their origin stories (Healey, 2013, p. 1520). The way origins transform into origin stories helps reveal the "rationalities or mentalities wrapped up in such stories and the forces which project them into movement" (Healey, 2013, p. 1520). Origin stories set the stage for the meaning and power of the concept that travels. Looking at the differences between an origin and the origin story or stories that it produced and circulated is key to understanding the power of a mobilized phenomenon.

Digging Deeper into the Origins of the High Line: What We Know

Despite the difficulty of ascertaining a project's origins, it is still useful to assert a 'true' origin for the High Line, which we will compare against its origin stories. Here I will dive more deeply into how the idea to convert the High Line into a park came to be. It starts with what we know, focusing on key actors in the development of the concepts for the High Line's reuse. As ideas must come from somewhere, we expand the discussion to relevant movements (efforts to

promote particular ideas and perspectives), providing a look at the idea histories that undergird the High Line's reuse. This full background is what the High Line's origin stories draw from.

People

The examination of mobilized policies and ideas, Rodgers (1998) argues, can “be imprisoned in a metaphor of space rather than of person and politics . . . far too bloodless to capture the phenomenon at work” (1998, p. 31). Investigations of policy networks and models often overlook the individuals and informal networks that play important roles. Here the first step in developing the origins of the High Line is to investigate the people who were key in generating the idea for its reuse – and what influenced them. While it is impossible to be certain that I identified all influential people, detailed research indicates that the people discussed in the following sections were the key sources of the ideas that shaped the reuse of the High Line. Note, however, that there is not much to add about Peter Obletz, who was covered in detail earlier. While he was likely the first person to propose converting the High Line into a park, it was not his primary desire for how the structure should be used, and I have uncovered no additional details of his vision or information about what may have sparked the idea.

Stephen Holl: A Bridge of Houses

In 1979, architect Stephen Holl came up with one of the first known proposals for repurposing the High Line. Holl proposed that the still not fully decommissioned High Line be converted into a “Bridge of Houses,” topped by a series of residential structures (Holl, 2009, p. 143). The buildings would range in size according to the load the structure could bear at various points. Importantly, each one would leave an open space along the center of structure, fronted with shops, so the High Line could act as “an elevated promenade” (Holl, 2009, p. 143). Recognizing that the area was changing from “a warehouse district to an art district,” the

proposal “reflects the new character of the area as a place of habitation” (Holl, 2009, p. 43). Holl undertook this project without a client – an act of visionary architecture that “arose from a desire to reuse a great old elevated steel structure. With great potential for public space” (Fisher, 2002, p. 121). He had a social vision as well. The residentially topped High Line would “offer the widest possible range of social-economic coexistence,” from single-room occupancy “offered for the city’s homeless” to “luxury apartments” (Holl, 2009, p. 43).

The notion of a bridge lined with houses and/or shops draws from a long line of architectural and planning experimentation and necessity. Pre-modern examples include the shops lining the Ponte Vecchio in Florence, Italy and, even more closely, the homes and shops atop the London Bridge from the 1300s through the 1700s (Home, 1931). More modern precedents abound, including Raymond Hood’s “Skyscraper Bridges” (Hood, 1929) and Hugh Ferriss’s “Apartments on Bridges” (Ferriss, 1929, p. 70), which depict a way to deal with the rapid growth that they believed New York City would undergo, back in the heady days just before the West Side Improvement Project. But Holl was not aiming to maximize the usefulness of space over a body of water or infrastructure – the High Line runs midblock above already very useable real estate, which makes it an inefficient way to add space to the city. Instead, Holl’s proposal is a significant shift in that it embraced the new notion that New York’s future was not inevitably a field of skyscrapers. Unlike like the visions and solutions projected by Ferriss and Hood, his reuse of the High Line would embrace the postmodern ethos of preservation and improvisation: “Reuse rather than demolition of the existing bridge would be a permanent contribution to the character of the city” (Holl, 2009, p. 43).

Holl’s proposal was an embodiment of the notion that the city’s future need not completely remove its past. Obviously Holl’s idea was never implemented, and at the time it

seemed nothing more than an architectural experiment. As Nicolai Ouroussoff, who would be the *New York Times* architectural critic during the High Line's redevelopment, put it: "Industrial wastelands have long been the battleground of the avant-garde . . . a 'Bridge of Houses' for Manhattan, a poetic housing scheme that was supposed to rest on the frame of Chelsea's defunct El-train . . . [and others] remained lofty dreams" (Ouroussoff, 1996, p. 1). In other words, no one took Holl's proposal seriously. In hindsight, however, it was an early indicator of how post-industrial infrastructure would be treated kindlier in the postmodern era.

Recognition of Holl's contribution is primarily confined to the more design-oriented and the more historically inclined discourses on the High Line's redevelopment as it was not directly the inspiration for the contemporary reuse of the High Line. Nevertheless, it remains well known among architects and designers, and it is frequently mentioned in discussions of his work (e.g., Frampton, 2003). Holl also taught his High Line project to Columbia University students, one of whom, James Corner, went on to be the landscape architect for its redevelopment.

Despite all this, Holl's contribution to thinking about the High Line does not generally find its way into the High Line's origin stories. Even attempts at more detailed histories of the High Line, like the Design Trust for Public Space's "Reclaiming the High Line" (David et al., 2002, p. 51), mention Holl only briefly. There are a few, rare exceptions. Architecturally focused discourse, like architecture critic Tom Dyckhoff's article about proposals for reuse of the High Line, mention how "Steven Holl got it right," crediting Holl's work (Dyckhoff, 2004). But most discourse excludes Holl from the origin story.

John di Domenico: Re-Use of Urban Infrastructure

Holl's Bridge of Houses had a particularly strong influence on one member of the architecture community: John di Domenico. Returning to New York from a Fulbright-funded

study trip to Rome in 1980, di Domenico was fascinated by the way history layered cities and how the past became embedded in the present as a catalyst for the future. His study of the subject was inspired by two influential postmodern works, *Collage City* (Rowe & Koetter, 1978) and *Architecture of the City* (Rossi, 1984), which counter the modern impulse to wipe away the past and instead promote layering and intermixing. Di Domenico asserted that the “principles they cite about the city and memory are still very valid today” and wondered at the time how this could be applied in the American context. Not a historic preservationist, he was primarily interested in how places “demonstrated a certain memory about the past and also the future” (personal communication, June 30, 2015). Holl’s “very evocative” pamphlet about the High Line connected with di Domenico’s thoughts about design and presented an opportunity to put them into action.

Di Domenico was teaching at City College of New York when someone encouraged him to apply for a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grant to formally investigate reusing the High Line, prompting him to seek out and discuss the idea with Peter Obletz. Obletz told di Domenico that the High Line was “about transportation for him,” and he was interested in reactivating it to remove truck traffic from the streets of West Chelsea. Still, di Domenico pressed forward, applying for and attaining the NEA grant. He included his architecture studio students in the project, taking groups of 15 students onto the then easy-to-access High Line. Because of Obletz’s activism at the time, di Domenico was stepping into an active debate about the future of the High Line.

The final product was titled “The West Side Rail Line in New York City: The Re-Use of Urban Infrastructure” (di Domenico, 1983). His study built a case for reuse of the High Line

based on what seems like settled doctrine today, extending the concept of historic preservation and urban artifacts in the contemporary city to more common infrastructure:

Urban infrastructure plays an important role in the composition of the city as artifact and stage set. Streets, rail lines and utilities are infrastructure providing a conduit for life's services. Infrastructure as artifact gives meaning for an area's development. Society associates meaning with these objects which transcend time to become a permanent part of the city's history. (di Domenico, 1983)

The study offered three historical precedents, the first two being the Palace of Diocletian in Split, Yugoslavia and the Theater of Marcellus in Rome. These two precedents, while seemingly odd examples for the relatively modern city that is New York, emphasized how old, obsolete structures can become seamless parts of the fabric of their cities over time. The third precedent was "bridge architecture," which pointed to the Ponte Vecchio in Florence, Italy; the London Bridge in London, England; and the Rialto Bridge in Venice, Italy as examples of how "bridges have served beyond the more obvious functions of allowing people to pass from one point to another" (di Domenico, 1983). By laying out these precedents, di Domenico placed the High Line in a larger movement of postmodern historic preservation: "An historical foundation is a framework for intervention; the historical model of houses on bridges serves as a premise. The resulting composition is a mixture of modern bridge superstructure with variations of urban building types" (di Domenico, 1983).

Building a case for preservation, the study laid out several alternatives for the reuse of the High Line, the first being a linear park:

[A] linear park providing a continuous 1.5 mile path for strolling, exercising and jogging, with more rigorous physical activities like tennis located in areas where the track widens.

Outdoor cafes and open air markets could also be established along the line. . . . The abandoned rail line would be transformed from a divisive element into a welcome open space component providing a link between the West Village and Chelsea. (di Domenico, 1983)

Aside from the focus on more active uses and recreation, this is a remarkably good description of today's reused High Line. The second alternative was similar to Holl's proposal, with housing perched above the structure "allowing developers to build on the rail in exchange for open space improvements along the line," but with less focus on a retail promenade (di Domenico, 1983). The remaining alternatives were grouped under "movement" and proposed three ideas: "[a] pedestrian path," "[a] jitney link from the Convention Center area to the West Village [that] would use an electric vehicle similar to those used at amusement parks to move residents and conventioners along the rail line," or "a light rail vehicle between the Upper West Side . . . to the West Village" (di Domenico, 1983).

Overall, di Domenico recommended reuse as a linear park as the best alternative, though he did not rule out any alternatives. Notably, di Domenico's study covered the all major ideas that had been floated for reuse of the High Line, except for Obletz's effort to restart goods movement. Much like the park's backers twenty years later, he even suggested a "Special Zoning District" for the area around the High Line to raise funds for the conversation.

For di Domenico, the goal was to never to become the High Line's champion, but to "provoke thinking about what you could do with it" and engage his students. He sent the study to a few places but does not remember receiving much of a response. He does not recall being contacted by FHL, though the Design Trust for Public Space did contact him when working with FHL on *Reclaiming the High Line*; along with Steven Holl, he gets a very brief mention in the

timeline (David et al., 2002, p. 51). Surprisingly for such prescient work, di Domenico and his study are almost completely absent from origin stories about the High Line. In addition to the very minor mention in *Reclaiming the High Line*, his current profile page at the New York Institute of Technology mentions that his “study became one of the catalysts that helped move forward plans for the High Line Park” (“John DiDomenico,” n.d.). But other mentions of him in the High Line’s story are hard to find.

Jeff Zupan: Transportation / Pedestrian Facilities

Another key actor, partially covered earlier, was urban planner Jeff Zupan. Zupan led the team at the RPA, which was working for CSX on plans for reuse of the High Line that could be promoted in place of demolition. He assembled a core team that included Robert Lane, then a newly hired urban designer at the RPA; Robert Olmsted of the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority; and Herbert Levinson, a transportation consultant. As the team members’ areas of expertise suggest, they approached the High Line from a transportation planning perspective, which started with the team leader.

Zupan’s background is primarily in transportation planning for pedestrians, and he coauthored what is considered a foundational work on quantitative methods of urban pedestrian planning: *Urban Space for Pedestrians* (Pushkarev & Zupan, 1975). This work advocates for pedestrianized streets and environments that exclude cars and other traffic, even arguing that there is “a strong technical case can be made for the exclusion of most vehicular traffic from major avenues in Manhattan” (Pushkarev & Zupan, 1975, p. 22). Zupan’s work clearly embraced the lingering modernist desire for separation of vehicles and transit, advocating for enhancements to above- and below-grade pedestrian areas that make them more desirable, rather than recommending their removal. However, this is not meant to imply that Zupan is an

inflexible urban planner stuck in an old mindset. Rather, his work is a window into the influences that led to thinking about reuse of the High Line's structure.

Zupan credits Robert Lane, one of his team members, with the idea of making the High Line a shop-lined walking path for recreation, though Lane does not remember this to be the case. They considered bicycle facilities as well, but deemed it too complicated to provide convenient access up to the platform. Zupan claims that the team's proposals relied on no precedents. He thought the shop-lined promenade was the best option and that his expertise and experience led him to this conclusion. While it seems unlikely that none of them had heard of ideas and proposals like Holl's and Obletz's, their professional areas of focus and the content of the report imply that they approached the project from a transportation planning perspective. Such a perspective must, inevitably, draw upon a repertoire of precedents and ideas, whether they are recognized or not. Ironically, despite his transportation focus, Zupan does not consider the High Line today as a transportation project. Instead, he sees it as walking space for recreation.

The RPA report is the most direct inspiration for the current reuse of the High Line, as the FHL's founders learned about ideas for reusing the High Line from the *New York Times* article that covered the RPA report's findings. Robert and Hammond first met at a Community Board 4 meeting where the RPA presented its report on the High Line in detail. Thus, the ideas for the High Line's reuse that came to fruition should largely be credited to urban planners through their work at the RPA. The High Line's origin was the product of planners trying to solve a specific problem for a client. However, this is very rarely covered in the High Line's origin stories.

Ideas and Movements

The High Line, for all its praise as an innovation, stands on existing ideas. Ideas must come from somewhere, even if their origins are not acknowledged or even consciously known by the actors who have them. As the architectural theorist Quatremère de Quincy argued:

Everything must have an antecedent; nothing whatsoever comes from nothing, and this cannot but apply to human inventions. We observe also how all inventions, in spite of subsequent changes, have conserved their elementary principle in a manner that is always visible, and always evident to feeling and reason. (1999, p. 255)

The High Line is the product of a variety of ideas that are largely still in motion as movements. By drawing on this point and using what we know about the key actors, we can expand our understanding of these ideas to other claims of influence on the High Line. The following sections probe some of the ideas and attendant moments that undergird the High Line's origins. Of course, a full history of the ideas undergirding the High Line could constitute a study in itself. Here I limit the discussion to key points that will provide a helpful frame for looking at the continuities and discontinuities within the High Line family tree, as well as for setting up parts of its main origin stories.

Urban Parks

A rather general idea to start with is “parks.” This is the most common and fitting descriptor of the High Line. “Parks,” however, is a rather broad category, so adding the qualifier “urban” makes for a more helpful description. Urban parks, unlike squares or commons, are relatively modern inventions that are primarily a response to the growth of the industrial city (Galen Cranz, 1989). Thinking about the High Line as part of the modern urban public park

movement connects it to long-running undercurrents and historical parallels in urban planning and development.

In the United States, much of the parks movement has been credited to the “Olmsted Agenda,” in recognition of Frederick Law Olmsted’s outsized leadership in shaping an American urban design and development agenda that focused public resources on the acquisition and development of “huge amounts of land for public parks, parkways, playgrounds, nature preserves and integrated regional parks systems” (Garvin & American Planning Association, 2000, p. 5). Urban parks were considered an antidote to the ills of unhealthy, inhumane urban environments. The movement gained traction in the mid-1800s, as it brought together the interests of urban reformers who were concerned about people’s health and welfare, political bosses who saw potential patronage jobs, laborers who needed work and, notably, property owners “who saw them as opportunities to profit from their real estate investments” (Garvin & Association., 2000, p. 9).

Galen Cranz (1989) has divided the American urban parks movement into four phases: the pleasure ground (1850-1900), the reform park (1900-1930), the recreation facility (1930-1965), and the open space system (1965 -). A quick review of her widely accepted outline helps frame the High Line in the continuum of the modern parks movement. The first period, the pleasure ground, focused on large parks with curving walkways and a sense of natural escape to provide public health benefits and promote social reform. Likewise, the reform park was focused on social reform, particularly around immigrants, but it was smaller, more distributed around the city, and centered on playgrounds, pools and more structured activities. The recreation facility, on the other hand, was less concerned with social reform and more focused on the widespread provision of active recreation – swimming, basketball courts, team sports – in standardized,

small and medium parks distributed around the city. Lastly, the open space system emphasizes the revitalization of cities (and responds to urban riots), with small, distributed sites thought of as a connected system that provides free-form activities and relief from the urban environment. While each period has distinctive aims and forms, the focuses of the earlier periods persist in their built legacy and infuse the approaches of successive periods.

In a more recent work, Cranz and Boland (2004) propose a name for the contemporary period of park development (1990-), which covers the production of the High Line: the “sustainable park.” This period focuses on human and ecological health with an emphasis on corridors (a legacy of the open space system) with walking, hiking, biking and natural stewardship as its key themes. In the process of defining and advocating for this movement, Cranz and Boland identify three principles of sustainable parks: resource self-sufficiency, integration into the larger urban system, and new modes of aesthetic expression. In many ways, the High Line embodies what Cranz and Boland describe. It is a linear park, or corridor – this may be its most central characteristic. Boosters promote it as a unique park experience that conserves resources through “natural” landscapes that require little or no additional watering, and it is part of the already existing and public New York City Parks and Recreation system.

In addition to being a modern, sustainable park, the High Line is closely aligned to the themes of the pleasure ground and the sensibilities and processes of Victorian New York. A brief look back at New York’s first iconic park, Manhattan’s Central Park, illustrates this point. Central Park is generally considered America’s first major public park (Garvin & American Planning Association, 2000, p. 9) and a model for the nation and world. Designed by Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, it is considered one the crown jewels of urban parks. It not only launched

Olmsted's prodigious career, which shaped urban parks and parkways all over the United States, but also remains a gold standard of urban parks today (Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1992).

Central Park's creation neatly parallels the High Line's in key ways. Central Park was led by what Scobey called "New York's Cultural Gentry": elites who as "advocates were bound in a dense web of personal, professional, and associational bonds" (2002, p. 227). This is a remarkably good description of the networks that produced the High Line over 150 years later. Much like the High Line's initial role as an improvement to the industrial city and symbol of technological progress, Central Park was both a symbol of socially progressive urban reform and the greatness of New York as a world city (Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1992, pp. 22–25). Just as the High Line was a prop in the world drama of progress through elevated railways in the early 20th Century, Central Park played the same role in the transatlantic exchange of progressive ideas and symbols in the middle of the 19th Century (Rodgers, 1998, p. 131).

Of course, there are many key differences between them, including the fact that Central Park was conceived as an "anticity" (Scobey, 2002, p. 229) – a respite from the city, with curving roads meant to turn your gaze back into the park and accentuate a sense of separation from the surrounding urban environment. The High Line, in contrast, is all about accentuating and framing the surrounding city. Yet the differences are not as stark as they may at first seem. Scobey describes Central Park as designed "in a dialectical relationship with New York: at once oppositional and prefigurative, anticity and antecity, pastoral refuge and booster prophecy" (2002, p. 230). The High Line, while not focused on being a pastoral refuge (though Oudolf's landscapes are supposed to evoke a kind of pre-tamed landscape), fits this description quite well for what is ostensibly a vastly different park 150 years later. It acts as a refuge from the

hardscape and hustle of Manhattan, but still puts the city on display and accentuates its iconic tableau in an unabashedly boosterish way.

The High Line fits squarely within the urban parks movement, with promoters frequently using it as a tool to garner support for new and improved urban park space. Likewise, the background of this movement is important to understand if one wants to comprehend the origins of the High Line and see its continuities and discontinuities in a more historical frame. Its success as a public space stands as a contemporary example to justify public parks as a preferred urban intervention – an illustration of success in reforming the urban jungle (and Manhattan is the ultimate urban jungle) with green space (Konnikova, 2015). Those who claim the High Line as part of the urban parks movement are asserting an origin story and deploying its rhetorical power to frame the movement as a salve to the particular urban condition.

Greenways and Rails-to-Trails

As the High Line is still typologically unusual as a park in many respects, the term “urban park” is not specific enough to shed sufficient light on the issue of origins. In addition to an urban park, the High Line is often described as a “greenway” (or, even more commonly and with similar meaning, a “linear park”). While far more specific than “parks,” the concept of “greenway” is still rather broad. In the comprehensive study *Greenways for America*, a touchstone book on the subject, greenways are defined as “a natural, green way based on protected linear corridors which will improve environmental quality and provide for outdoor recreation” (Little, 1995, p. 4). Greenways bring the central element of linearity into focus.

Again, linking back to that seminal figure underlying American urban parks, the idea of greenways in America is largely credited to Fredrick Law Olmsted (Little, 1995, p. 7). He designed what is generally considered the first greenway in the United States: Boston’s Emerald

Necklace (Fábos & Ryan, 2004, p. 143). The movement came into its own in America in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a response to urban decline, pollution, and deindustrialization.

Likewise, most modern greenways fit temporally and typologically into Cranz's open space system period of parks, which started in 1965. Greenways are also recognized as an international movement, spreading across the globe as an idea and landing in a wide array of contexts (Fábos & Ryan, 2004).

While mostly rural, greenways such as Boston's Emerald Necklace also have a longstanding urban tradition. The High Line certainly falls under the greenways movement as an idea – its linear and green(ish) space are core typological similarities. For the greenways movement writ large, the High Line has become a shining exemplar of success. The greenway-promoting organization American Trails included the High Line as a “featured trail” in its magazine, holding it up as an example of the power of greenways to transform neighborhoods (“New York City's High Line,” 2011). Core similarities notwithstanding, there are still meaningful differences between the reality of the High Line and the fundamental concept of greenways. Greenways are largely considered as “linked together in a network in much the same way as our networks of highways and rails have been linked” at large scale – regional, state, and even national (Fabos, 1995, pp. 4–5). Likewise, while walking is a key aspect of greenways, their intended scale and connectivity are often more amenable to more active uses, particularly biking. The High Line is less of a respite from the urban than most greenways are envisioned to be. It is also relatively short, not part of a network, and not bikeable or designed for active recreation (instead, it attempts to slow its visitors' pace). It does not fit particularly well into the dominant ideas behind the greenway movement.

The rails-to-trails movement brings more specificity to the concept of greenways and fits the High Line as well. Rails-to-trails is “the reuse and multiuse of abandoned railroad corridors” for recreation (Felleman, 2014, p. 1139). They are greenways on converted railway rights of way. At its base, this is exactly what the High Line is – a railway converted into a recreational use (if a less intensely active one than greenways generally imply). For our purposes, the most important distinction is the underlying policy apparatus that makes a rails-to-trail project.

The policies that undergird the rails-to-trails movement in the United States were developed starting in the late 1960s and 1970s. Faced with rapidly declining rail traffic and the widespread financial insolvency of the railroads, the federal government began planning for the management of national railroad assets, including the critical rights of way that had been amassed. The National Trails System Act of 1968, which focused mostly on rural and natural areas, had already laid the groundwork for identifying greenway opportunities throughout the nation, including repurposed rail corridors. In 1976, the Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act, as part of creating the STB, created a “rail banking” system that smoothed the way for converting more rail corridors to greenways. In 1991, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act stipulated that 10 percent of all surface transportation funds must be spent on projects that include pedestrian and bike facilities, specifically mentioning abandoned railroad corridors as targets (Felleman, 2014, p. 143). Additional policy and legislative actions have also strengthened the focus on trail networks that include railroad corridors.

Rails-to-trails is about the potential of abandoned railway corridors and what to do with them. Policies around rails-to-trails have produced a framework that not only encourages railway reuse as greenways, but also provides legal means for dealing with ownership issues and financial support. Both as an idea and as a policy intervention, this widely embraced movement

has travelled the world. Seeing abandoned railways as potential recreation corridors has become part of the repertoire of ideas for almost anyone involved in urban planning and design.

It is unsurprising, then, that an article on the popular *CityLab* website by Sarah Goodyear asserted that the rails-to-trails movement was the origin of the High Line. The article was the first part of a special series on “Citymakers: Connections, How urban breakthroughs spread and evolve” that focused on “The Rails to Trails Legacy” (Goodyear, n.d.). It begins by asserting that the High Line phenomenon is essentially a high point of the rails-to-trails movement:

[T]he underlying concept behind it [the High Line] – the conversion of a disused rail corridor into a welcoming public space – didn’t come out of nowhere. The decades-old Rails-to-Trails movement had a major influence on the project, along with dozens more like it across the United States and around the world (Goodyear, n.d.)

While covering a mixture of the history of the greenways and rails-to-trails movements, the article asserts that the 1978 Burke-Gilman Trail in Seattle, Washington is the first urban rails-to-trails conversion. It also covers a variety of milestones and precedents, including the Promenade Plantée in Paris, France, an important precedent that I will cover in more detail later. When the history reaches the High Line in 2009, Goodyear calls it a “game-changing park” that “led to a scramble among cities proposing to replicate the model” (n.d.). The history ends in 2012, with a short description of the “global influence” and a look forward to some of the budding descendants of the High Line (Goodyear, n.d.).

Unsurprisingly, the rails-to-trails movement looks to the High Line as a model and illustration of success. As described earlier, the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), which is the leading national organization for the movement, assisted with the production of the feasibility study for the High Line. The High Line became a crown jewel for the movement, and RTC lists

it as one of 30 projects in the “Rail Trail Hall of Fame” (“Rail-Trail Hall of Fame,” n.d.). Additionally, the October 2011 “Trail of the Month” blog on the RTC website praises the High Line for “the shining example it has become for the national rail-trail movement” (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2011). In this same blog, however, an interview with FHL’s Hammond reveals that neither he nor David “had any background in rail-trails” (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2011). This weakens the claim that the High Line originated in the rails-to-trails movement, at least in relation to FHL’s two founders.

While rails-to-trails has been primarily a rural and wilderness movement, there have been rails-to-trails projects in urban contexts for nearly half a century, at least. Coinciding with their assistance for the High Line, the RTC launched an “Urban Pathways Initiative” in 2009 – a push to increase rails-to-trails in urban areas (Pack et al., n.d.). The rails-to-trails movement has been and continues to be involved in promoting the ideas and policies that undergird the conversion of urban rail corridors to greenways. Closer examination, however, undermines the idea that rails-to-trails is the origin of the High Line. Many elements of rails-to-trails exist in the High Line, and there is no doubt that the ideas behind the movement influenced the High Line’s reuse. But there are fundamental differences, as the examples presented as ancestors in the *CityLab* article, save for the Promenade Plantée, are typologically quite different. The High Line embraces its urban surroundings more than they do, is shorter and not part of a larger network, shuns most active uses, and has a much more involved and complicated design. The article asserts a strong conceptual relationship between the High Line and the rails-to-trails movement, but it oversimplifies its break from past rails-to-trails projects as a kind of innovation within the movement. But the High Line is markedly different from the long-standing rails-to-trails

movement, and so is the High Line phenomenon, as many ancestors and descendants have no rail connection whatsoever.

We must distinguish, therefore, between a project produced via rails-to-trails policies and a project whose original conception grew out of the rails-to-trails movement. The High Line's reuse was made possible by rails-to-trails policies. The policy that allowed for rail banking, for instance, was pivotal in preserving the High Line's easements and allowing the shift towards recreational use instead of forced demolition. Yet this need not be the case for all ancestors or descendants. Internationally, different or no policies may undergird similar projects. Even in the United States, railbanking may not undergird High Line-like projects. For example, the Reading Viaduct in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is one of the most typologically similar descendants of the High Line and its structure. But it is not built on easements, and the underlying land is owned outright by a private landowner (with a small spur owned by a public agency). Railbanking is not a key tool in this instance, though the project could benefit from other rails-to-trails policies like those that provide funding.

The origins of the High Line have certainly been influenced by the greenways and rails-to-trails movements. In broad strokes, these movements have influenced the repertoire of all planners and designers as well as paving the way with precedents. The interest in safeguarding a rail right of way for future use, core to the rails-to-trail concept, is probably most aligned with Obletz's thinking. The recreational use of linear corridors as greenways, whether they admit it or not, had to have influenced the RPA team. However, there is limited evidence for the claim that the High Line's redevelopment originated primarily in these two movements, particularly when we look at Holl's and di Domenico's work.

Historic Preservation and Industrial Heritage and Preservation

The High Line is an important example of historic preservation, which is the preservation or conservation of physical sites and structures that have developed cultural significance and meaning. The reuse of the High Line, an 85-year-old structure that embodies significant aspects of Manhattan's industrial period, decidedly counts as historic preservation. As a project, the High Line is often described as "preservation" or "historic preservation" in wide discourse. Unsurprisingly, it has become a shining example of the historic preservation movement.

The leading group in the United States' historic preservation movement, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, has used the High Line as a case for preservation, particularly for saving historic bridges (e.g., Sauber, 2016). An interesting example of their adoption of the High Line as exemplar comes from a "Cities in Focus" piece on St. Louis, Missouri (Stevens, 2014). Drawing on "a pretty constant stream of inspiration for what we do," the Cities in Focus series seeks to "share some of these inspiring things with a bigger audience" (Stevens, 2014). Looking at a variety of St. Louis's preservation efforts, the article covers The Trestle, an abandoned rail viaduct in an industrial area north of downtown: "The one we're most excited about STL [St. Louis] will soon have its own version of New York City's High Line . . ." (Stevens, 2014). The High Line is an exciting historic preservation win and precedent for the movement.

Industrial heritage and preservation, which is a subset of historic preservation, is also important to touch upon here. 'Industrial heritage and preservation' is an academic or professional term, not one used by the wider public, and it refers specifically to artifacts of industrialization (primarily western and 19th or 20th century). As with rails-to-trails in relation to greenways, the High Line is part of this sub movement by definition. Per a guide by the International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage (TICCIH), "recognition

and valuing of the material evidence of industrialization” has become part of public consciousness (Douet & International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage, 2012, p. 7). Thus, the High Line has become a shining example for the contemporary industrial heritage and preservation movement. A picture of the High Line is featured on the second page of TICCIH’s guide, in the Introduction (Douet & International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage, 2012, p. 2). The guide also describes the conversion of the High Line as “a spectacular instance of the appeal of abandoned lines and their cultural potential” (Douet & International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage, 2012, p. 149).

The growing appeal of preserving a vanishing industrial past is clearly one of the strongest conceptual origins of the High Line. At base, it is what moved Holl and di Domenico to care about the High Line at all. And, though not part of the High Line’s core idea generation, Hammond and David were primarily motivated by the desire to preserve an industrial artifact that had been brought to their attention; its use as a park was a means to that end and not their initial purpose. The High Line’s contemporary reuse has no single origin, but the largely postmodern values that embraced the preservation of a piece of industrial heritage are certainly part of its foundation.

Origin Stories, Mobilized

The actors and movements that undergird the production of the High Line are a complex intermingling of ideas and influences. Likewise, telling a history of the High Line and the forces and systems that led to its reuse is a narrativization of these complexities. It compresses history in a way that foregrounds and backgrounds key aspects in specific ways. And this has crucial political and power implications. The movements that carry ideas about urban parks, greenways,

rails-to-trails, and historic preservation, among others, have used their connection to the High Line's origins to claim power for their advocacy positions.

Likewise, there are many different, traveling origin stories for the High Line, with many different emphases. There is a rather common origin story, particularly in popular discourse: two young residents of West Chelsea, Joshua David and Robert Hammond, who, with a passionate idea in 1999 to save the elevated railroad in lower Manhattan from demolition and to create a unique park, won a battle of "Davids" over the "Goliath" of the city's bureaucracy and real estate industry (La Farge, 2012). This is the short-form origin story, and a common one. As the deep recounting of the High Line's reuse revealed earlier, there is more than a grain of truth to this account.

Some of the other origin stories are less detailed, some more. Occasionally they briefly mention the roles of Stephen Holl, Peter Obletz, or both. Some point out that Mayor Bloomberg and others, such as 'forward thinking developers,' were involved in the High Line's preservation and reuse. Other accounts include the public-private partnership between FHL and the City of New York. Some include rails-to-trails and/or historic preservation. And many do not refer to Hammond and David by name; they refer only to FHL. FHL, Hammond, and David are frequently categorized as "civic activists" who led a "grassroots" or "community based" effort. In many cases, Hammond and David are elevated as local heroes and saviors of the High Line and the neighborhood. Stories often include a little background as well, mentioning the West Side Cowboys and "Death Avenue" and depicting the surrounding neighborhoods prior to the High Line's reuse as a post-industrial wasteland.

What different sources emphasize speaks to how the High Line's origin stories are about influence and power. For example, in an opinion piece in the *New York Post*, politically

conservative editor Steve Cuzzo (2014) attacked Mayor Bill de Blasio by stating that his shunning the opening of the third section of the High Line was a sign that he lacked the vision of his predecessor, Mayor Bloomberg. Cuzzo had long championed Bloomberg (and the Bloomberg Way). In order to promote the former Mayor's approach, he countered the more common origin story of the High Line centered on FHL, writing: "Although the park's inspiration and basic conception are legitimately credited to Friends of the High Line founders Robert Hammond and Joshua David, its actual creation is mostly a product of Bloomberg's muscle" (Cuzzo, 2014). Cuzzo frames the origins of the High Line's success to argue for the continuation of the "Bloomberg way" as opposed to de Blasio's call for more equity in development citywide. Notably, in the process of trying to correct the record and enlighten his readers as to the High Line's origins, Cuzzo fails to give planners and the RPA due credit.

Another helpful example of how aspects of the High Line's reuse story are foregrounded or backgrounded comes from the *Korea JoongAng Daily*. Covering ways to improve pedestrian facilities in Seoul, South Korea, one of the newspaper's articles quotes the head of a "walking-environment related civic group" on how the High Line came to fruition: "New York's High Line Park, which used to be a deserted railway line, was initiated by citizens, not by the city's leadership" (Special Reporting Team, 2014). This was written in the context of building an argument for grassroots leadership of ideas for pedestrian improvements in Seoul. The framing of this origin story promotes an argument that emphasizes the grassroots origins story.

The grassroots, citizen-led origin story is particularly widespread. Hammond and David have actively promoted the notion that they came in with no skill and no contacts – taking a grassroots or "bottom up approach." They have very actively preached the value of the High

Line as a “bottom up” project that “began at the community level” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 127). The preface of their book about the reuse of the High Line illustrates this assertion:

“A pair of nobodies who undertook [an] impossible mission”: that’s how a journalist writing about the High Line’s unlikely success once referred to the two of us.

It’s true: When we started we knew very little about preservation, architecture, community organizing, horticulture, fundraising, working with City Hall or running a park.

Our lack of expertise was a key to the High Line’s success. (David & Hammond, 2011, p. VII)

While it is true that the two started with little experience or knowledge in park planning and development, the foregrounding of this argument – the very starting point of their book – makes its way into a wide range of High Line origin stories. It is the basis of the hero, grassroots origin story.

Professor Aseem Inam of the New School, in his blog post for *TRULAB* titled “Should we love or hate the High Line,” provides an excellent example of the hero, grassroots origin story. Criticizing other narratives of the High Line that foreground issues of historic preservation and policy, Inam uses an origin story to shift debate to what he sees as a more productive narrative:

[P]erhaps most importantly, what is missing from many of these narratives is what I call radical humanism, which views our humanity as a source of inspiration and a course of action. One of the most compelling aspects of the High Line is how two apparently ordinary citizens, Robert Hammond and Joshua David, set about to save the old elevated railroad tracks and repurpose them. At the time, they had no significant funding, no

political contacts, no training in landscape or urbanism, and no experience in the field. The story of how they brought the issue to the public eye, how they generated creative ideas for its adaptive reuse, how they built political coalitions, how they harnessed private resources, and how they doggedly pursued the project in the face of enormous challenges is truly inspiring. At the end of the day, the narrative of the High Line is also a narrative of how human beings are capable of transforming cities through tremendous effort, creativity, and perseverance. (2014)

Addressing an academic audience, Inam argues against critical researchers' growing condemnations of the High Line as a tool for gentrification and a product of deep inequities. Some, seeing how Hammond and David were able to bring powerful elites, financiers, and professionals into the FHL fold from very early on, question how grassroots or bottom up the project really was. At a panel where Hammond spoke about the High Line as a bottom up effort, author Malcolm Gladwell quipped: "It was 'bottom-up' from a bunch of very sophisticated architects and planners. I mean, if that's 'bottom-up,' I'd love to be on the bottom" (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 127). Like many other parts of origin stories, the hero, grassroots narrative can be defended as being based on some truths. But, whatever its veracity, it is a tool for shaping attention, deflecting criticism and forwarding an argument.

This is just a sample of the many ways that the origins of the High Line are shaped into origin stories. No narrative is ever complete, and I do not intend to criticize origin stories simply for being incomplete. But, using Healey's observations, the point is to direct attention to how the narratives are constructed and used. What is foregrounded and backgrounded in most cases? Hammond and David are most often foregrounded as grassroots, non-expert, heroic. The neighborhoods' industrial past is foregrounded, and its decline is dramatized. Government and

planners are backgrounded. The enormous wealth and power that backed the project are seldom fully revealed. These are key takeaways from the landscape of the High Line's popular origin stories. And many of the origin stories that have developed contain a kind of neoliberal narrative.

The clearest origin of the High Line's reuse, the RPA's work, was in many respects the product of a rather prosaic rational planning exercise and expertise in action. While the private sector provided remarkable financial assistance, it also took an even larger amount of government assistance and support to bring the project to fruition. Hammond and David's creativity and gusto notwithstanding, the role of experts and the state is purposely diminished in the majority of origin stories to make a political point. The example of David and Hammond's ability to pull off one of the world's greatest redevelopment projects with no expertise and no money, against powerful foes – particularly the government – is meant to prove that private actors of any status can succeed in the market of ideas, if their idea is innovative and worthy. This narrative is powerful because of its “self-evident alignment with the primary contours of contemporary political-economic power” (Peck & Tickell, 2002, p. 381). The High Line's leading origin stories carry out a political project – one that most often is about reinforcing the successes of contemporary neoliberal urban development.

Ancestors: Precedents and Pretenders

Just as origin stories carry meaning, arguments, and power, so does being classified or asserted as an ancestor. As discussed earlier, sites framed as ancestors of one of the world's most lauded urban revitalization projects can bask in a reflected glow. This research has identified nineteen pre-High Line projects that assert an association. Most of them are not well-known, at least not outside of their home cities, but each has gained some level of new favor and energy by association. And each reflects assertions about what the High Line is and was influenced by.

Rather than examine each one in detail, we can return to the *CityMetric* article for examples (CityMetric staff, 2015). This article identifies only three ancestors, but it is still helpful. *CityMetric* is the urbanism magazine website of the British magazine *New Statesman*, which makes it analogous to the popular *CityLab* of *The Atlantic* magazine in the United States. As *CityMetric* is based in London, a city mad for High Lines, two of the three ancestors in the article are unsurprisingly located in London. One is Parkland Walk, a 4.5 km rails-to-trails greenway in North London. It is a straightforward path surrounded by green instead of buildings, “overgrown, rather than landscaped” and not elevated (CityMetric staff, 2015). A second is the Mile End Green Bridge, a wide, landscaped pedestrian bridge that connects two parks on either side of large a roadway in Tower Hamlets Council. While elevated, it has no rail history, is rather short, and is quite simple.

These two examples are, at first glance, hard to justify as ancestors of the High Line. There is no known connection between them and the High Line, and to the casual observer, they have little in common with it. The assertion rests on the characteristics of linearity, rail or elevation, and green/pedestrian space as the core traits of the High Line. The article asserts that the High Line is an improvement upon the two projects, but stating that they pre-existed the High Line implies that London was on to something early as an early innovator. The association with the High Line gives these rather unglamorous and unknown projects a new cachet and meaning. The third example in the *CityMetric* article, however, is quite different. Not only is it in Paris instead of London, it is arguably the single most important ancestor of the High Line.

The Promenade Plantée

The Promenade Plantée is a 2.9-mile greenway built on an abandoned rail right of way in the 12th Arrondissement of Paris, France. It includes an elevated masonry viaduct, at-grade

sections, below-grade sections with tunnels, and small sections of various other linear park typologies. While commonly referred to as the Promenade Plantée in English, which translates into “planted walk,” its formal name is Coulée Verte René-Dumont. “Coulée” is like the English word “coulee,” which is a ravine or gulch that was formed by flowing water and “verte” means green – essentially, the Coulée Verte is a kind of green flow through the city. Its formal name honors René-Dumont, a famous French political figure. The Promenade Plantée, as the entire Coulée Verte will be called here, is often and incorrectly described as the inspiration for the High Line. Though it was an important precedent, and it contains many of the lauded innovative qualities of the High Line, it was completed over a decade and half before. Examining it provides insights into the narration of ancestors, precedents, and the peculiarities of what does become a global phenomenon. As a project in a central part of Paris, France, a city with a long history as a model of urbanism and one that can hardly be considered “off the map,” the relative obscurity of the Promenade Plantée prior to the High Line’s globally admired reuse is perplexing.

History

The Promenade Plantée is constructed on the former Bastille-Vincennes railway line that connected central Paris to its suburbs and the Strasbourg railroad. The Bastille-Vincennes railway, completed in 1859, was developed as part of Napoleon III’s and Baron Haussmann’s modernization of Paris (Meade, 1996, p. 52). According to Heathcott, author of a key scholarly work on the Promenade Plantée in English, the original Bastille-Vincennes railway was an expression of the “ruthlessly technocratic ethos of modern civil engineering . . . slicing its way across the street and neighborhoods of the 12th Arrondissement in order to network Paris with the nation” (2013, p. 183). The elevated portion that extended from Place de La Bastille, the Viaduc de la Bastille, is now called the Viaduc des Arts and is a 0.6-mile masonry structure of 64 large

arches that an architecture critic once described as “red brick spandrels setting off the stonework of the vaults, piers and arches, finished off with boldly corbelled stone cornice and blocking” (Meade, 1996, p. 52). The below-grade portion artfully ducks beneath the city streets and was designed to reach to reach the outskirts of the city without disturbing the flow of the city above. Like the High Line, it separated rail traffic from the street, thereby increasing speed and safety. It also acted as a symbol of modernity and progress (both in its handsome elevated parts and its skillfully concealed below-grade portions). In many ways, the railway embodies many of the core goals of modernization and aesthetics found in Haussmann’s remaking of Paris.

Unlike the High Line, the original Bastille-Vincennes railway had a long useful life of 110 years. It was in use until 1969, when the RER A commuter line began service and the Bastille-Vincennes railway became unnecessary as a connector to the suburbs. The transportation agency transferred the redundant rail line to the municipal government (Ayers, 2004, p. 189). While the surrounding 12th Arrondissement was considered a grittier, working-class residential neighborhood at the time, it was far from abandoned. And so, like the High Line, the disused railway quickly found informal use among area residents: “As early as the 1970s, adventurous Parisians had quietly laid claim to the vacated viaduct as a kind of insurgent habitat. The abandoned rail bed became a haven for bird watchers, underage drinkers, drug dealers, and urban explorers” (Heathcott, 2013, p. 284). The arches under the disused Viaduc de la Bastille were also put to use, as “enterprising Parisians established numerous makeshift auto repair shops, studios, brasseries, and squats under the arches of the viaduct” (Heathcott, 2013, p. 284).

Unsurprisingly, many of the area’s residents demanded that something be done with the railway and its growing informal uses. Some asked that it be torn down, while others advocated for a new commuter line or use for freight service (Heathcott, 2013, p. 284). In the mid-70s, city

plans called for the removal of the viaduct, but they were thwarted by the fact that the northern side abuts buildings and its removal would require significant, costly, and disruptive retrofitting of structures (Meade, 1996, p. 52). The planning for the railway's future eventually became an adjunct to the "Grands Projets": a major, government-led planning effort for the Paris region, starting in 1978 by Mayor François Mitterrand (Heathcott, 2013, p. 284).

The Grands Projets, also commonly called Grands Travaux or the Grands Projets Culturels, was a 30-year-long campaign of major cultural projects that ostensibly aimed "to help reshape and broaden conceptions of French Culture" (Beaton, 2009, p. 372). The first of these landmark projects was the Pompidou Centre; it includes other famous endeavors, such as the remodeling of the Louvre Museum. Another of the Grands Projets was the Opéra Bastille, a new opera house at Place de la Bastille, which abuts the western end of the Viaduc de la Bastille. It was an area that "cried out for revitalization," according to some (Beaton, 2009, p. 378). The handsome Gare de La Bastille, completed in 1859 with the Viaduc de la Bastille that served it, was demolished to construct the opera – a considerable erasure of historic fabric in Paris. The construction of the opera was problem prone, its modern architecture was not well received, and – while it is a fully functioning opera house today – the project "remains reviled" by most Parisians (Beaton, 2009, p. 378).

At the time, Parisians were "increasingly traumatized by the destruction of major Parisian landmarks" (Heathcott, 2013, p. 285). Likewise, "[f]rustrated by the focus on grandiose megaprojects and lack of green space in the city's redevelopment schemes, residents of the Twelfth pushed officials to rethink the clean-slate urban renewal approach" (Heathcott, 2013, p. 285). Unlike early proposals for the High Line, the idea for converting the former railway in the 12th Arrondissement into a greenway "garnered support from a wide range of government,

nonprofit, and business interests” from the start (Heathcott, 2013, p. 285). A new government planning agency, Société d’économie mixte d’aménagement de l’Est Parisien (SEMEST), was charged with reconceiving the revitalization of the East Bank in order to meet the changes in public sentiment. In 1985, SEMEST released a plan that envisioned the railway converted into a greenway, and a design competition for the project was undertaken in 1988 (Heathcott, 2013, p. 285). The project was awarded to architect Patrick Berger, who served as lead designer and focused mostly on the Viaduc de la Bastille, and to architect Philippe Matthieu and landscape architect Jaques Vergely, who focused on the non-elevated greenway portions (Heathcott, 2013, p. 285). The winners were all French architects, and, while Berger in particular has had an accomplished career, none have ever achieved the starchitect status of the designers of the High Line.

While the plan to save the railway and develop the Promenade Plantée was a major shift in how the government approached revitalization and became more responsive to citizens’ desires, it was still part of the ongoing effort “to convert the Right Bank of Eastern Paris [including the 12th Arrondissement] from a working class industrial landscape to a high-end district populated by upwardly mobile professionals” (Heathcott, 2013, p. 283). As in the case of the High Line, one primary goal of policymakers was to improve property values in the area by providing new amenities. It was what French academics call “French neoliberal lite” – while less welfarist than more the socialist interventions of the recent French past, it was still part of a very intentional effort to catalyze markets. Yet the Promenade Plantée was still a completely government-led effort and was constructed to be a fully public space, run by a public agency.



FIGURE 13: THE REFURBISHED VAULTS OF THE VIADUC DES ARTS. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ANDREW TRIVERS.

Like the High Line, the Promenade Plantée opened in three phases, between 1988 and 1994 (the vaults of viaduct were not fully opened until 1998). The Viaduc de la Bastille was renamed the Viaduc des Arts, and the archways that had been converted to various commercial spaces were updated into airy, glass-fronted storefronts. The new commercial tenants are a mix of boutiques, cafes, and creative industry studios. According to Heathcott, “from the moment it opened, the Viaduc des Arts and the Promenade Plantée enjoyed critical and popular success” (2013, p. 286). Although the economic effects were subdued in comparison to those of the High Line, “the population and employment base of the neighborhood underwent a substantial transition” that did increase property values (Heathcott, 2013, p. 287). Much like the area around the High Line, the area around the Promenade Plantée has seen a transition to higher-income

residents and more creative industries. Also, like the High Line, this once off-the-map area for tourists was placed on the map, as it “surfaced in the discursive space of travel magazines, books and blogs throughout the 1980s and 1990s” (Heathcott, 2013, p. 289).

Design and Experience of the Promenade Plantée

The Promenade Plantée provides a variety of experiences. Running from west to east through the 12th Arrondissement, it begins behind the Opéra Bastille on the elevated Viaduct des Arts, paralleling Avenue Daumensil. Thirty feet wide (like the High Line), the viaduct runs parallel to the street, not in it, abutting buildings to its northernmost side. Like the High Line, the Viaduct des Arts runs through one building, though this building is contemporary to the viaduct. In language mirroring that used to convey the experience of the High Line, Heathcott describes the experience thus: “The running elevation provokes a wholly new experience of the city, what might be called an elevated urbanism. Hovering above the second stories, the promenade compels attention to the architecture – particularly to the details less obvious from the street” (2013, p. 286).



FIGURE 14: VIEW FROM THE VIADUC DES ARTS. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ANDREW TRIVERS.

While the Promenade Plantée allows for views down major thoroughfares lined with classic Parisian apartment buildings, the narrow and numerous curving streets of Paris limit the length of most views. With practically no empty lots surrounding it and no large bodies of water like the Hudson River, it does not provide the same sweeping views that the High Line does. Nevertheless, the interest provided by having such an unusual pedestrian perspective still satisfies most visitors.

Where the viaduct ends and the Promenade Plantée angles slightly more north, a contemporary building closely hugs the structure, creating a narrow walkway. From here, a small pedestrian bridge spans an intersection to continue the greenway onto the platform of a

contemporary apartment building. Off that platform, a narrow bridge carries the greenway over a sunken park called the Jardin de Reuilly-Paul-Pernin.



FIGURE 15: PROMENADE PLANTÉE PASSING BETWEEN TWO NEW BUILDINGS NEAR THE JARDIN DE REUILLY-PAUL PERNIN. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ANDREW TRIVERS.

This park was initially planned before the Promenade Plantée and then was subsequently tied into the project (Heathcott, 2013, p. 285). The greenway continues after the park along a short midblock promenade and transitions from midblock into a comfortably broad segment that runs in the middle of the street. From there, it goes through the plaza of a modern development,

where it briefly becomes less distinct before dipping below grade into a short tunnel under an intersection and through a narrow sunken park that is the Promenade Plantée proper. Most of the Promenade Plantée after this point is reminiscent of a traditional urban greenway project. It continues below grade, intermittently going under buildings and intersections through tunnels, most of which still use the original rail line's infrastructure. At the Avenue du Général Michel Bizot, the greenway comes up to grade. A branch with a contemporary elevated walkway flanked by apartment buildings continues into a nearby park. The main greenway continues at grade and then dips below grade in green-lined culverts with intertwining pathways that slip under some streets, meeting with a bikeway at the Boulevard Périphérique, bordering the suburbs. A tunnel in this area links the Promenade Plantée to the Bois de Vincennes, a large park in the inner suburbs.



FIGURE 16: VIEW OF A BRIDGE ON THE PROMENADE PLANTÉE PASSING OVER JARDIN DE REUILLY-PAUL PERNIN. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ANDREW TRIVERS.

The overall experience and aesthetics of the Promenade Plantée are generally slow paced and green: “[O]riginally constructed for motion, connection and destination, it now frames a counterpoint of slowness, rest and contemplation” (Heathcott, 2013, p. 287). In general, it is an inward-facing park, even on the elevated portions. The “unique viewshed of Paris” (Heathcott, 2013, p. 287) notwithstanding, the Viaduc des Arts’ pillars with vines, large hedges, and other plantings allow even the elevated space to provide a refuge from the city. While the High Line

does have small spaces of green that can envelop the visitor, there is far less than can be found on the Viaduc des Arts. The abundance of vegetation fits with the vision of Paris's regional design agency for "the greening of the city," of which the project was a part (Meade, 1996, p. 52). The at-grade portions of the Promenade Plantée are, for the most part, tree lined, and its below-grade portions, hugged by green, feel very removed from the city at times.

The Promenade Plantée's design aesthetic is also mostly subdued. Along its length, small playgrounds and other recreational amenities are available, while plentiful benches provide places for people watching. The park itself has no retail or services component, which underscores its function as a respite from city life. Bicycling is allowed where the greenway overlaps with cycling pathways, but cycling is not allowed on most of the Promenade Plantée, and various features (stairs, narrow passages, etc.) impede its use. The greenway is popular with runners, however, and thus far it has not been so clogged by crowds that this activity has been impeded, as it has in the High Line.



FIGURE 17: TRELLISED ARCHWAY ON THE VIADUC DES ARTS OF THE PROMENADE PLANTÉE. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MARTIN MURRAY.



FIGURE 18: ON THE VIADUC DES ARTS OF THE PROMENADE PLANTÉE. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ANDREW TRIVERS.

Design and planning for the Promenade Plantée was influenced by the contemporary “French landscape practice of *préverdissement* – a term borrowed from horticulture that means to encourage a particular botanical scheme through initial plantation” (Heathcott, 2013, p. 286). *Préverdissement* began in the 1960s and 1970s, partly in response to deindustrialized, abandoned and ecologically damaged space (Granello, 2015, p. 55). It is rooted in an ecological restoration perspective, in which the future use of a the site is uncertain and “the process of re-appropriation of the territory by the public and private entities” is encouraged (Granello, 2015, p. 55). In some ways, this perspective aligns with the views of many actors involved in the High Line as they sought to convert the formerly industrial, off-limits viaduct into a public amenity. However, in other ways, it is divergent from the High Line’s design approach. Corner and his Landscape

Urbanism perspective, in particular, sought not so much to return the High Line to the city as to remake urbanism – which is something the designers of Promenade Plantée neither intended nor achieved. The production of the Promenade Plantée was embedded in postmodern Parisian social politics that were deeply tied to the preservation of the beloved existing Parisian urban fabric, even though some did aim to change the social and economic status of the neighborhood. Even the few new buildings that were built with the redevelopment of the Promenade Plantée employ a contextually sensitive design and morphology. The High Line, however, was predicated on a political deal in which preservation of the High Line and some of its surrounding fabric would lead to upzoning resulting in drastic changes for much of the area.



FIGURE 19: THE PROMENADE PLANTÉE AT GRADE RUNNING IN THE MIDDLE OF ALLÉE VIVALDI. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ANDREW TRIVERS.

Inspiration or Precedent?

As the above sections on the history and design of the Promenade Plantée illustrate, there are remarkable similarities and important differences between it and the High Line. The Promenade Plantée has a more varied landscape and a more subdued design, with less sweeping views than the High Line. It is also associated with less dramatic urban physical and social change. But at its core, the Promenade Plantée (particularly the Viaduc des Arts) is

fundamentally what the High Line is – an urban elevated railway turned into a dramatic linear park that is well liked and helped catalyze the redevelopment of the surrounding neighborhood. It encompasses all of the core ideas and movements of the High Line, formally or not: parks, greenways, rails-to-trails, and historic preservation. While not aimed at displacing Paris’s traditional urbanism, it reflects a re-embrace of modernist conceptions of urbanism and pedestrian movement, as described by Martin Meade in *The Architectural Review* in 1996:

[N]ot only does this new linear pedestrian park revive the device of the elevated promenade (provided by the seventeenth and eighteenth century Paris boulevards on the city rampart, and the raised pavement of Bath and Bristol) but it demonstrates, too, that CIAM notions of vehicular and pedestrian traffic separation were not totally misguided. (1996, p. 54)

Like the High Line, the Promenade Plantée reframed urban space and history, or, as Heathcott argues: “[It] reflects the production of new urban imaginaries in the context of late capitalism” (2013, p. 281). As identified earlier, the High Line has become a kind of traveling urban imaginary – a mobilization of a kind of contemporary aspirational urbanism. The Promenade Plantée, as Heathcott points out, was a similar type of urban imaginary, though it had not mobilized in anything near the same way as the High Line.

The Promenade Plantée embodies all of the High Line’s core concepts, but it was completed nearly a decade and half before. Thus, it is often wrongly considered the direct inspiration for the High Line. For example, the Wikipedia entry for the High Line describes it as “[i]nspired by the 3-mile (4.8-kilometer) Promenade Plantée (tree-lined walk), a similar project in Paris” (“High Line (New York City),” 2016). As another example of how such simple assertions spread, a newswire article on the celebration of the High Line’s fifth birthday, by

Agence France Presse's New York Bureau, imprecisely states that it "was inspired by the 'Coulee Verte' in Paris ("New York's High Line fetes fifth birthday," 2014b). This newswire item was picked up by publications around the world, including ones in Malaysia (Dusseau, 2016; "New York's High Line turns 5," 2014; Star2.com, 2016)¹, Kenya ("New York's High Line fetes fifth birthday," 2014c), and Canada ("New York's High Line fetes fifth birthday," 2014a). Ironically, the article ends with comments from a Parisian tourist interviewed on the High Line who "was smitten with the park," but mentions nothing about it in comparison to the Promenade Plantée: "'I'm totally hooked,' she said, admitting she had been returning each day. 'The Design is very beautiful, very minimalist but functional at the same time ... it's amazing'" ("New York's High Line fetes fifth birthday," 2014b).

It is a widespread belief that the Promenade Plantée inspired the High Line. An article in the *Hartford Courant*, about a fundraising tour by a local fire engine company, states of the High Line stop that it was "inspired by the 3 miles Promenade Plantee [sic], a similar project in Paris completed in 1993" ("Baltic Fire Engine Company #1 NYC bus tour," 2016). The notion that the High Line was inspired by the Promenade Plantée is not only an imprecision repeated in the media or by laypeople, however. A helpful example of this comes from a Delaware Valley public radio interview series about urban revitalization that seeks "to glean wisdom and ideas from some of Pennsylvania's top urban thinkers and doers" (Previti, 2014). The expert, when responding to a question about what he has seen in "travels to other places that you could bring back," replied that the High Line is one of his favorite examples and also asserted the seemingly

¹ The online portal for Sin Chew Daily, My Sinchew, lists Brigitte Dusseau as the author. However, the original newswire story does not include an author. Dusseau was the New York Bureau Chief of Agence Presse France at the time.

knowledgeable point that it was inspired by the far lesser known Promenade Plantée in Paris (Previti, 2014).

This wide, though not at all universal, understanding of the High Line as inspired by the Promenade Plantée is important in that it is not just an error being repeated; it asserts a narrative about the origins of the High Line that places the Promenade Plantée in a specific hierarchy. It creates a satisfying flow of ideas, a kind of rational progress of urbanism from one great city to another. Portrayed as an innovation or improvement on an idea from an old capital of urbanism, the High Line thereby crowns a new capital of urbanism. This is a key discourse that helps underlies the idea of the High Line's descendants as a kind of best practice – any project framed as building upon this progression of ideas that currently culminates with the High Line becomes a rational next step in a teleological urban future.

Of course, this conception is not exactly true. Within the large arc of ideas and movement regarding urban space, the Promenade Plantée and High Line are certainly linked. But there is no known direct link between the Promenade Plantée and the origin of the High Line as an idea. Steven Holl's and John di Domenico's work predates the Promenade Plantée, and the RPA group claims it was not a precedent. Therefore, according to current evidence, the Promenade Plantée was not a direct inspiration or the origin of the idea of the High Line. It was, however, an important precedent. The first time the Promenade Plantée is documented as being considered as a model for the reuse of the High Line is in the fall of 1999, when a friend of David's, who had lived in Paris, told him, “[y]ou know, there is something like the High Line there” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 14). David's uncle and grandmother lived in Paris; he was already headed there for Thanksgiving that year, so he would have an opportunity to visit. Most notably, even though he had family in Paris and had also been interested in the High Line's reuse for some

months at the time, he had never heard of the Promenade Plantée, which had been open for approximately six years at that point. Upon visiting, he was impressed with the Promenade Plantée, but since the idea convert the High Line into a park was already established, it was important to him primarily as a precedent: “People had done this . . . So it was really not a totally insane idea. It had happened in Paris, and it could happen in New York City” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 14).

There is an essential distinction between an inspiration (or origin) and a precedent. Precedents act as a justification for the feasibility and viability for an idea that someone already wants to pursue. As discussed earlier, Bloomberg also made an appeal to the precedent in Paris when advocating for the High Line, saying the city had “paved the way for this concept when it converted a similar viaduct into an elevated park ten years ago” (David et al., 2002, p. 4). It is a clear appeal to precedent – that it has been and can be done successfully.

As a precedent, the Promenade Plantée’s role in the production of the High Line was mostly a discursive tool. When the High Line’s reuse as a park was in its design stage, FHL reached out to the designers involved with the Promenade Plantée for input; the primary advice they received was to provide more seating than originally planned (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 84). But overall, Hammond and David were almost dismissive of the usefulness of Promenade Plantée as a precedent, with Hammond commenting:

We’d been to the Promenade Plantée, in Paris, but that design doesn’t play off the unusualness of the structure: it is like that of a regular Parisian park, with rose trellises, an alle of trees, and a little water stream in the middle. I thought it would be a missed opportunity if we saved the High Line and then put a standard park up there. (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 56)

This is at once a recognition of the deep similarities between the two places and an indication that, context aside, the biggest physical difference between the two projects is in their design details.

Putting the Promenade Plantée on the Map

The High Line's success has shone a new light on the Promenade Plantée. Jennifer Robinson, in theorizing how cities "register on intellectual maps," argues that some become "off the map" if they do not fit certain norms of modernity (2002, p. 531). Borrowing liberally from this concept, one might say that among global urban revitalization phenomena, the Promenade Plantée was, at least relative to the High Line, off the map. Such an assertion may be somewhat surprising, as modern Paris has an important and dominant history as a model of urbanism (Rodgers, 1998, p. 166). Contemporary Paris remains a world city as a leading financial and cultural capital. But despite having many of the same innovations that garnered praise for the High Line, and having opened a decade and half earlier in a city famed for its urbanism, the Promenade Plantée was relatively little known and praised outside Paris for nearly a decade after its opening.

The opening of the Promenade Plantée did not receive anything close to the global media attention received by the High Line, though in fairness they opened at significantly different times in terms of the state of global media and technology. There was local coverage in Paris and France, but it appears to have been comparatively subdued (e.g., Ambroise-Rendu, 1994). Early international coverage of the Promenade Plantée is limited. For example, in the typically worldly *New York Times*, the first mention of the Promenade Plantée (including the names Coulée Verte and Viaduc des Arts) is in a 1996 letter to the editor. The letter, from a reader in Long Island, New York, asks that editors "[a]dd to the joys of Paris a brand new park" that "is not very well

known – not even all the concierges know about it yet. And since it is so new it is not very heavily trafficked” (Prison, 1996, p. XX12). The first mention of the Promenade Plantée in an article for the *New York Times* is only a few words in a 1997 travel advisory (“TRAVEL ADVISORY; A Connoisseur’s Tour de France,” 1997). The next article to include it was published in 2000 and was primarily about the High Line (Dunlap, 2000). Not only does the *New York Times* coverage hint at the lack of international attention to the Promenade Plantée early on, but the letter to its editor even points to the mild level of attention Parisians gave it in the very beginning.

The Promenade Plantée did get some early attention from the international design community, however. One of the earliest signs of interest was coverage of the project’s plans in a Japanese architecture magazine (*Process: Architecture*, 1989). Others examples include a German landscape architecture journal (*für Gartenkunst und Landschaftspflege*, 1994) and, in North America, *The Architectural Review* (Meade, 1996) and *Garden Design Magazine* (*Garden Design Magazine*, 1997), as well a few others at later dates but before the opening of the High Line. Still, the production and opening of the Promenade Plantée seems to have received just a fraction of the attention garnered by the High Line.

As the Promenade Plantée opened prior to the extensive proliferation of the internet, an examination of online discourse surrounding it, like that done for the High Line in the previous chapter, could be misleading. But there are other ways to gather clues as to the amount of attention and fanfare it received. Google Books (<http://books.google.com>), which claims to be the world’s largest repository of scanned and online books, provides an increasingly accepted data set that is “more structured and purposive” than many reference search options (Hai-Jew, 2015, p. 516). The database is by no means a representative sample of all books and magazines.

However, drawing data from major libraries around the world, it does provide an unparalleled sample that yields some insights. A search on Google Books for “Promenade Plantée” + “Paris” on 12/12/16 produced 556 results. For comparison, the same search on that day for “High Line” + “New York” returned 19,100 results. This is a quick indicator of how the spread of the High Line dwarfs that of the Promenade Plantée.

A similar probing of citation databases, which focused on scholarly instead of popular publications, also provides a glimpse into the lack of initial response to the project. The three leading databases are Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Scopus and Web of Science returned 5 and 1 results, respectively, for the search “Promenade Plantée” + “Paris,” and all of the articles were dated 2013 or later. This reveals that the Promenade Plantée had not been covered in top academic journals until well after the success of the High Line. Still more can be gleaned from Google Scholar, which is a free access bibliographic database of scholarly and related works. While it has a number of flaws in terms of consistency and duplication, it has become an accepted source of citation information (Adriaanse & Rensleigh, 2013). By drawing on Google Books and other data aggregated by Google, it includes a wider coverage of databases than other citation databases (Kousha & Thelwall, 2008). On 12/12/16, the search for “Promenade Plantée” + “Paris” returned 536 results. Again, for comparison, a search for “High Line” + “New York” on the same date produced 8,540 results. Of the results for the Promenade Plantée search, 243 were materials dated through the year 2008, which covers 15 years after the opening of the greenway. Between 2009 and 12/12/16, there are 281 results for the search, covering a mere seven years since the opening of the High Line. This is a good indication of how much the High Line has increased interest in the Promenade Plantée, or increased its visibility “on the map.”

Popular travel discourse can also help put the relative global obscurity of the Promenade Plantée in perspective. In Heathcott’s article on the Promenade Plantée, a footnote about the popularity of the project for tourism states, “[t]he Promenade now appears in most major Paris guidebooks and on tourist-oriented web sites. A Google search returns over 100,000 image hits and 25,000 video hits” (2013, p. 289). While this was true when Heathcott published it in 2013 — four years after the High Line became a global sensation — his observation reflects the more recent praise and interest in the Promenade Plantée that was created by the success of the High Line. Looking at the historical coverage of the project in travel guides provides a way to understand the progression of awareness and status for the Promenade Plantée. Here I use Fodor’s, one of the oldest and most established American guidebook brands, and look at each issue of its main Paris guidebook, the “gold guide,” that I could locate for the years between 1991 and 2017 (see Table 4).

TABLE 4: FODOR PARIS GUIDES DATA

Year	Promenade Plantée	Coulée Vert	Viaduct des Arts	Includes "Before Sunset"?	Mentions High Line	Pages
1991	no	no	no	n/a	no	
1992	no	no	no	n/a	no	
1993	no	no	no	n/a	no	
1994	no	no	no	n/a	no	
1995	no	no	no	n/a	no	
1996	no	no	no	n/a	no	
1997	no	no	no	n/a	no	
1998	no	no	yes	n/a	no	49, 52, 59
1999	no	no	yes	n/a	no	59, 67
2000	no	no	yes	n/a	no	71, 77
2001	no	no	yes	n/a	no	83, 88
2002	no	no	yes	n/a	no	88, 92
2003	no	no	yes	n/a	no	71, 75
2004	no	no	yes	no	no	54, 59
2005	no	no	yes	no	no	75, 81,82
2006	no	no	yes	no	no	91, 97
2007	no	no	yes	no	no	91, 92, 97
2008	no	no	yes	no	no	127, 128, 134
2009	no	no	yes	no	no	135, 136, 142
2010	yes	no	yes	yes	no	153,154,155,164
2011	yes	no	yes	yes	no	153, 154,155, 164
2012	yes	no	yes	yes	no	153, 154,155, 164
2013	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	151, 153 152, 160,161
2014	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	151, 152,153, 161
2015	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	143, 144, 145, 153
2016	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	139, 149
2017	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	113, 114, 121,122

I searched the guidebooks for mentions of the Promenade Plantée by various common names, and I analyzed the patterns and details of its coverage. Starting in 1991, the 12th Arrondissement receives little coverage in the guidebook other than a mention of the Place de la Bastille as the site of the former prison and new opera house. Starting in 1994, the guidebook slightly expands its description of the areas beyond Place de la Bastille, and in 1995 it begins mentioning the building of Parc de Bercy, one of the major revitalization projects in the 12th Arrondissement near the Promenade Plantée. This indicates that, in line with Heathcott’s

assertion, revitalization efforts in the area were having their intended effect of attracting outside attention. However, the Promenade Plantée does not appear to play any outsized role in this process. The first mention of the Promenade Plantée (specifically, the Viaduc des Arts) is in the 1998 guidebook – three years after the first vaults of the viaduct were renovated and reopened and two years after the opening of the promenade from Bastille to Reuilly. Amplified attention was part of increased coverage of sights and activities east of Place de la Bastille that had previously received little or no coverage.

While laudatory, the belated first mention of the Promenade Plantée was brief. The description of the Viaduc des Arts notably praises planners: “[w]ith typical panache, Paris planners have converted this redbrick viaduct . . . into a stylish promenade” (Lesser, 1997, p. 59). Accentuating the intrigue of this off-the-map neighborhood, it concludes by describing the experience as a kind of refined perch from which one can view a still-wild area: “The neatly pruned shrubs and designer benches clash provocatively with the dilapidated eye-level roofs of this seamy sector of the city” (Lesser, 1997, p. 59). This final line was absent in the following year’s guidebook, and the next seven years of guidebooks added very little description of the Promenade Plantée, other than mentions of its growing popularity. However, the area east of Bastille did get progressively more coverage over the same time period. By 2005, the area is described as a locale for hipsters and the Promenade Plantée as pulling in large weekend crowds. Still, the whole area is generally covered in a broad “East of Bastille” section, and accounts of the Promenade Plantée describe a pleasant and unique experience, if not an extraordinary one. By 2007, the guidebook had stopped mentioning planners.

In 2007, an expanded East of Bastille section lists the “Top 3 Reasons to Go” to the area, one being the Viaduc des Arts, which is described as “[a] surprisingly successful project along a

disused rail line” (Trefler, 2007, p. 91). This is also the first year that the Promenade Plantée entry is marked with a star, which indicates it is “highly recommended.” In hindsight, it seems quaint to describe such a project – which has since entered the canon of best practices by virtue of the High Line’s world-renowned success – as “surprisingly successful.” In 2008, the development of a “Canal St-Martin, Bastille, and Oberkampf” section gives more detailed attention to the area and the Promenade Plantée; in the following year’s edition, which coincides with but was published before the opening of the High Line, the Promenade Plantée is described as “enormously popular” and a top reason to go to this “hot neighborhood” (Trefler, 2009, p. 136).

Starting in 2010, the entry adds a mention for the American movie *Before Sunset*, a 2004 film directed by Richard Linklater and starring Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy that features the Promenade Plantée (Linklater, 2004). The majority of the film features the two protagonists strolling and chatting through the streets of Paris, with 12 minutes of the 80-minute film taking place on the Viaduct des Arts. Notably, Delpy, the Parisian protagonist, suggests the route along the Promenade Plantée rather nonchalantly, not naming it but simply calling it a “garden path.” The film’s treatment of the Promenade Plantée points to its real function as an everyday part of Paris life. The fact that its role in the film did not make the guidebook until six years after the film debuted – and shortly after the High Line became an international sensation – speaks to the way the High Line phenomenon has shaped the narration and promotion of the Promenade Plantée. The guidebook’s use of the major motion picture as the park’s claim to fame speaks to the desire to (or need) to sensationalize the Promenade Plantée for potential tourists.

In 2012, Eastern Paris (primarily the 12th Arrondissement) gets its own section in the guidebook, and in 2013 the book gives the Promenade Plantée an expanded description that

characterizes it as the “inspiration for the famed High Line” (Trefler, 2013, p. 161). Between 2013 and 2017, the guidebooks continue to highlight the Promenade Plantée as a key sight for the area, including additional photos in the section. Sometimes a photo of the Promenade Plantée is even the lead image for the section. While the shift in coverage of the Promenade Plantée in Fodor’s is not exceptionally dramatic, there is a clear ramp-up in coverage and excitement about the park that coincides with the redevelopment of the High Line. Early coverage in the guidebooks indicates that the Promenade Plantée did not begin as something spectacular, but over time, and coinciding with the exploding popularity of the High Line, it was reinterpreted as a spectacular, worldly site worthy of attention from outsiders as well as locals.

The High Line’s wild popularity has undoubtedly created more vigorous interest in the Promenade Plantée. For example, an article in *The Washington Post* introduced readers to “Paris’s original ‘High Line’” (Biggar, 2015, p. G.1), while London’s *Observer* includes it in a 2014 article on five of the best free things to do in Paris, calling it “similar to the High Line” (Coldwell, 2014, p. 55). The project’s placement as a High Line ancestor has raised its profile by placing it within a hierarchy of success. For example, proponents of The Trestle, a potential descendant of the High Line in St. Louis, Missouri, invoke the Promenade Plantée along with the High Line when pitching the project. The project’s marketing claims that St. Louis “will join Paris and New York City in the distinctive honor of having a converted a rail trestle as a public open space” (Friends of The Trestle, 2013). This message was repeated by an excited local news broadcast with the question “Paris, New York and next St. Louis?” (Yarchin, 2012). The use the Promenade Plantée as a precedent (ancestor) has created increased attention for the project and is reshaping local and global understandings of it as an urban intervention and site. Although the

Promenade Plantée is certainly a worthy project in its own right, the High Line phenomenon appears to have played a significant role in putting it on the map.

Descendants of the Promenade Plantée

Establishing the extent to which the Promenade Plantée is a popular and internationally known project is important when evaluating its role as an ancestor. The Promenade Plantée was not the specific inspiration for the High Line, though Heathcott asserts that the Parisian project “has catalyzed efforts in many cities to adapt obsolete rail infrastructure to new uses” (2013, p. 287). As demonstrated above, prior to the High Line, the Promenade Plantée appears to have been relatively little known; certainly, it was not a sensation of similar caliber. Likewise, relative to the explosion of projects inspired or influenced by the High Line, the Promenade Plantée appears to have had a rather mild impact as inspiration or precedent. In *Reclaiming the High Line*, the study for the reuse of the High Line by the FHL and Design Trust for Public Space in 2002, only two existing examples of elevated rail structures converted into parks were identified at the time: the Promenade Plantée and the Stone Arch Bridge in Minneapolis, Minnesota (David et al., 2002, p. 20). Both projects were completed around the same time, so it is unlikely that the Promenade Plantée influenced the Minnesota effort. The study also identifies one precedent in New York City, Gantry State Park, that utilizes rail infrastructure to create an at-grade promenade and two floating bridges (David et al., 2002, p. 19). There is no indication that Gantry State Park, which opened in 1998, was inspired or even influenced by the Promenade Plantée. In his 2015 retrospective, the project’s designer, Thomas Balsley, does not mention the Promenade Plantée as an inspiration, instead referring only to New York City and Barcelona (2015, p. 10). Essentially, the report found no projects for which the Promenade Plantée was the direct inspiration.

Certainly, there may be more projects that draw direct inspiration from the Promenade Plantée. One project, the 606 in Chicago, Illinois, was in part directly inspired by the Paris project and not the High Line, as is sometimes claimed. Still, the High Line's influence has clearly been exponentially greater than that of its Parisian ancestor. The family tree sample in the previous chapter shows only nineteen projects that preexisted the High Line (one of them being the Promenade Plantée), versus 165 descendants post-High Line. It is the High Line that has truly sparked such a large wave of descendants, despite being a fundamentally very similar project to the earlier Promenade Plantée.

From Origins to Ancestors to Descendants

Origins are important not just when probing for an idea history, but also to help understand and, in some cases, demystify origin stories. The origins of the High Line bring together the work of various actors dealing with the artifacts of post-industrial cities and new, postmodern sentiments for their treatment. They intersect with key movements and ideas that undergird the approach to the High Line, its ancestors, and its descendants. How these many actors and movements are narrated through the High Line's origin stories reveals various actors' mentalities and rationalities. Those who want to further rails-to-trails foreground rail reuse, those who want to emphasize the neoliberal narrative and/or the Bloomberg Way foreground private actors and real estate development, and so forth.

Ancestors become part of this narrative of creation. Being an ancestor of the High Line is a claim to the world stage, an assertion that your city's planning and development were groundbreaking and full of foresight. Association with the High Line reframes past projects, some of them as prosaic as could be, into something more spectacular. It feeds into a narrative about the progression of urbanism, with the High Line being the current apotheosis of post-

industrial reuse that has built over time. While it is true that the larger movements that underlie the idea of the High Line continue to grow and spread, the naturalizing of a continuum that led to the High Line is misleading. It is a tale that gives power to the High Line as a precedent while falsely portraying a smooth evolution that does not exist.

Chapter VIII **The Descendants of the High Line: Continuities and Discontinuities
with a Mobilized High Line**

Developing the “family tree” for the High Line demonstrates the great influence of the phenomenon on perceptions and practices in urban planning, design, and development around the world. The projects that it has influenced are considered its descendants – the offspring of a world-famous example of success. Some descendants appear to be rather straightforward offspring of the High Line phenomenon, as they are projects that were clearly inspired by the High Line and its success. But as these descendants are not biological (having real physical DNA that is exchanged between organisms to make descendants), their relationship with the High Line is not one of parent and offspring. For many ideas, the High Line was not their origin; instead, these projects – previously shelved and lacking support – were bolstered and made more viable by the High Line.

Here we will look at descendants, examining both the relationships between the High Line and its progenies and the continuities and discontinuities of the High Line phenomenon in the places it lands. As a product of an ever-globalizing neoliberal political economy and urban culture, the High Line phenomenon is embodied largely in a specific urban imaginary of redevelopment and contemporary aesthetics. This imaginary has played out with remarkable continuity around the world. Yet place still matters, and there are no copies of the High Line physically, experientially, or in terms of process. Investigating the continuities and discontinuities between descendants and the “real” High Line sheds light on which parts travel,

how they travel, how the High Line as a mobilized phenomenon” “lands” or is situated in the places in which it is adopted, and how it influences planning and development practices. This chapter focuses on just two existing descendants, which allows for an in-depth examination. It concludes with an overview of the ever-expanding cadre of descendants completed, in process, and proposed.

The Dequindre Cut

At first glance, the Dequindre Cut, a two-mile urban greenway in Detroit, Michigan, does not seem much like the High Line. Although their first phases were nearly concurrent, it is the inverse of the High Line in other respects: sunken below grade, low budget, simply designed, and without famous designers. In the family tree analysis, the Dequindre Cut was categorized as a “compare” project (not initially inspired by the High Line). With a typological score of eight, it was assigned to wave two and rated less typologically similar to the High Line. Part of an urban push by the rails-to-trails movement and the conversion of industrial heritage into new urban amenities, the Dequindre Cut is an example of a project in which the underlying movements and initiatives become intertwined with the High Line phenomenon. The two projects had a direct link from their mutual early developments, as key leaders of the Dequindre Cut and FHL were in communication, and each considered the other a “kindred” project. The High Line phenomenon not only became a significant booster to the expansion of the Dequindre Cut, but also helped to redefine the image and meaning of this rather simple Detroit greenway and, by extension, Detroit.

History

Like the High Line, the development of the original Dequindre Cut was a response to industrial growth and the resultant conflicts between rail and vehicular traffic early in the

American industrial period. Detroit, like many cities, experienced rapid industrial growth, which started in the late 1870s and accelerated at the turn of the century. The urban corridor that the Dequindre Cut would eventually run through had grown to house over 400 industrial firms by the 1920s, including such venerable automobile manufacturers as Studebaker Automobile Works and Cadillac Motor Company (Galster, 2012, p. 49; Michigan Department of Transportation, n.d.). The city's "haphazard street plan" led to traffic bottlenecks and massive congestion, prompting the City of Detroit to partner with the Grand Trunk Railroad to build railroad lines to help alleviate congestion (Michigan Department of Transportation, n.d.). Railroad development became a driver of Detroit's development pattern over the first two decades of the 1900s, creating "a distinct pattern of two concentric crescents, each with an open side towards the river, each with a nexus of railroads at its core" (Galster, 2012, p. 49). The Dequindre Cut, also referred to as the Grand Trunk Line of which it was part, made spokes in these crescents, and it extended from the Detroit River out to Grand Avenue, with two small spurs paralleling the river downtown (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2002, p. 25). Construction costs for the excavation of the 4.2-mile culvert and the 22 road bridges over it were split between the City of Detroit and the Grand Trunk Railroad, with the last of the work being completed in the 1930s (Michigan Department of Transportation, n.d.).

The Dequindre Cut carried passenger traffic until 1982 and commercial traffic until a few years later (Wasacz, 2005). The abandoned and out-of-view, below-grade right of way "stoked the fires of artistic inspiration, creating a natural canvas for guerilla painters, sculptors and writers, who remade portions . . . into an unofficial art park" (Wasacz, 2005). The Dequindre Cut became a gallery of street art, a place that developed its own allure and underground cache. Much like the High Line, the Dequindre Cut became a place of mystery, "dark and foreboding,

and difficult to access; none but the bravest urban explorers were likely to venture in” (Wasacz, 2005). Although the surrounding neighborhoods largely considered the sunken space out of sight and mind, they believed the only realistic future for the Dequindre Cut was one in which it was filled with dirt and brought to grade. In their sparsely populated area and crime-plagued city, a below-grade space was unlikely to ever be viable.

Reuse

The reuse of the Dequindre Cut involved several key players but was largely spearheaded by the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan (CFSEM). Greenway visions for Detroit date back to the 1970s, which spawned a never-implemented plan for linked riverfront parks (Hartig et al., 2007, p. 312). In 1989, a rails-to-trails focus for greenway planning got a boost when the national Rails-to-Trails Conservancy opened a Michigan field office. This dovetailed with a number of greenway initiatives and plans in the 1990s, many with a rails-to-trails component, including a major report in 1998’s *A Vision for Southeast Michigan Greenways*, which was jointly published by the Michigan chapter of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Office of the National Parks Service (Hartig et al., 2007, p. 312).

In tune with the growing movement for greenways in southeastern Michigan, CFSEM funded a program in 2001 called the GreenWays Initiative, which brought together eight nonprofits interested in greenways and related issues, including the Michigan Chapter of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. The goal was to raise \$25 million in foundation and other private funds to leverage \$75 million in total funds for regional greenway projects. According to Tom Woiwode, Director of the Greenways Initiative for CFSEM, the foundation was less interested in greenways per se, and more interested in promoting walking and biking and helping people re-

envision their communities. In 2002, funded by CFSM and led by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the initiative produced a report called *GreenWays Initiative: Planning for Detroit's Rails-to-Trails* (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2002) that built upon “the farsighted blueprint provided by” the 1998 report and mapped out a way of using Detroit’s still-abandoned rail infrastructure to build a “regional network of greenways and trails” (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2002, p. 1). According to the report, the Dequindre Cut was considered for conversion to a greenway in an unnamed 1994 report and had been considered for a future light rail corridor by the City of Detroit (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2002, p. 25).

No efforts to convert the Dequindre Cut to a greenway or light rail had materialized by 2002, but other visions did make headway. At one point a holding company for MGM Casinos began acquiring pieces of the Dequindre Cut for conversion to a road for direct I-375 freeway access to planned riverfront casinos (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2002, p. 25), though plans never went forward. A small portion of the southeastern end of the Dequindre Cut at the Detroit River was lost when General Motors bought it in order to build a new parking garage for the Renaissance Center (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2002, p. 25). Still, the majority of the corridor was intact, and the report identified the Dequindre Cut as one of the most promising sites for greenway conversion in Detroit. Not only did its boundaries overlap with other greenway and revitalization initiatives, its connection to the Detroit Riverfront meant it was “sure to receive some attention as an important route to bring bicyclists and pedestrians to the revitalized area” (Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2002, p. 78). This was a prescient piece of planning, as the Dequindre Cut’s success would become closely tied with the very popular Detroit Riverfront project.

After publication of the report, Woiwode, along with colleagues who were involved in downtown Detroit revitalization efforts, began a conversation about what it would take to make the conversion of the Dequindre Cut into a greenway happen. The conversation did not start from models, but rather from the desire to build on the success of the revitalized riverfront. Recognizing the opportunity that a revitalized riverfront had created, they moved the Dequindre Cut moved to the forefront of their efforts, as it created an opportunity to link more neighborhoods through a greenway, thereby connecting people to the riverfront. Woiwode also recognized that “ownership is often the bane” of these types of projects and knew that the City of Detroit, due to its renegotiation of its fiber optic line leases, had recently gained control of the right-of-way. It was not until after the CFSM greenways program settled on the Dequindre Cut as its key project that it sought precedents.

Woiwode and CFSM played a key role in coordinating the project. At first, CFSM looked for another organization to lead the Greenways Initiative. Surveying 23 communities in North America for greenway precedents, they found that the driving force in every single case was a local or regional government authority. But the City of Detroit lacked administrative capacity, and regional politics in the Detroit region did not provide many other public options. Because of these difficulties, and even though it was five times larger than any project taken on by CFSM and the organization had previously shied away from capital investments, the Board agreed to take responsibility as the lead organization for developing greenways in Detroit. From there unfolded a complicated but not necessarily unique process of raising money and building coalitions. Notably, the nonprofits in the coalition were heavily weighted toward an interest in regional greenways, biking paths, and rails-to-trails projects. Todd Scott, Executive Director of

the Detroit Greenway Coalition, was a key early organizer and principal agent to bring kindred nonprofits into the fold.

While organizations and funders were brought on board relatively easily, the community surrounding the Dequindre Cut was not initially supportive. According to Scott, most community members thought it was bad idea at the time – they could not imagine being in a “ditch” for recreation and questioned how it could be kept safe. Or, in parallel with the story of the High Line, Woiwode remembers it as follows: “The immediate universal reaction to the idea of building a trail there was, ‘You are out of your freaking mind’” (Stark, 2013). But public and wider institutional interest turned around quickly, and the project was swept up in the desire to create “amenity experiences for out of town visitors” for the National Football League’s Super Bowl in Detroit in 2006, though backers were unable to accelerate the project’s completion in time. The Dequindre Cut, now complete, is loved by its neighbors, and Scott notes that one of the project’s biggest naysayers is now an advocate for an ambitious plan to extend 26 miles of greenways around Detroit.

In the end, CFSM raised \$30 million for the Greenways Initiative from 15 foundations, with the largest contribution being \$10 million from the Kresge Foundation. As in the case of the High Line, these private funds were key to the early organization and eventual production of the Dequindre Cut. In 2003, the CFSM used some of these funds to give the Downtown Detroit Partnership, an economic development organization, a nearly \$100,000 grant to begin to develop plans for the Dequindre Cut. Downtown Detroit Partnership hired Smithgroup JJR, a national planning and design firm headquartered in Detroit, to develop plans and costs. Ground was broken for construction of the first phase in 2007. There was excitement over the opening, with coverage from the local media, as the greenway was particularly noteworthy in a city where new

public amenities have been few and far between for many years. Much like the opening of the High Line, the opening of this project included the excitement of discovering a once-off-limits place and a wistfulness for its wild, pre-tamed charms. As one local writer put it, “[s]oon the Dequindre Cut’s inaccessibility – but hopefully not its romantic allure – is about to change” (Wasacz, 2005).

The first phase of the Dequindre Cut, which runs from the riverfront to Eastern Market, opened May 14th, 2009 to a marching band and some short speeches by local political leaders, such as then Mayor of Detroit David Bing (Heron, 2017). There were no celebrities, major national political leaders, or big surprise donations. In the end, construction of the first phase cost a modest \$3.4 million dollars and was funded by a mix of public and private money. Like the High Line’s, the bulk of the Dequindre Cut’s construction cost was paid for by public funds, with an over \$2 million Federal Technical Assistance Grant coming through the Michigan Department of Transportation. A \$5 million, half-mile extension opened April 29, 2016. The extension was funded in part by private funds and a \$10 million federal TIGER grant, which is part of a \$24 million greenway project that extends the Dequindre Cut northward and links it to a larger greenway system.

Like the High Line’s, the operation and maintenance of the Dequindre Cut are for the most part privately funded. Because the City of Detroit lacked capacity to manage the Dequindre Cut, these duties were given to the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy (DRFC). CFMS provided a \$2 million grant to establish an endowment (Wasacz, 2005). Like the FHL, the Conservancy raises money – though at least one decimal point short of the High Line’s – through a mixture of donations, memberships, corporate philanthropy, and events. However, unlike the High Line, the

Dequindre Cut is not part of the city's public park system. Although it is owned by the City of Detroit and is open and free to the public, the Conservancy runs it independently.

The Experience of the Dequindre Cut

Relative to the experience of the projects discussed in any detail so far, the experience of the Dequindre Cut is exceedingly straightforward. In broad strokes, it is a lightly improved below-grade former rail right-of-way corridor with a bike and pedestrian path running through it. The entrance to the Dequindre Cut can be hard to find, as it's at the Outdoor Adventure Center, a repurposed industrial building on Atwater Street along the northern edge of William G. Milliken State Park and Harbor. This is the Dequindre Cut's current link to the large riverfront open space system. The eastern end of the popular Detroit Riverwalk cuts through the State Park and ends a half block south of the start of the Dequindre Cut, which is connected to the Riverwalk by a small stretch of sidewalk. The large Outdoor Adventure Center building obscures the connection, making it hard for many newcomers to find. This is something backers hope to improve upon.

From there the Dequindre Cut continues north, surrounded by a mix of empty parcels and industrial buildings, on a concrete path with a planted center at grade for approximately two blocks. The entire pathway is divided into separate sections for biking and pedestrians. Shortly before the major thoroughfare of East Jefferson Avenue, the path begins to descend below grade, eventually reaching approximately 25 feet below street level. From here, the experience is rather consistent. The 20-foot-wide path is set to the eastern side, leaving the western half of the space as empty lawn for a potential future light rail line. The sides are primarily earthen and green, with naturally occurring vegetation. Simple lights with occasional emergency call stations and benches facing the path dot the center of the space. The design is extremely straightforward, and there are almost no design flourishes or high-end materials. At two places along the first phase of

the path, long, sloping entries from the street level merge into the greenway, allowing for easy bike access.



FIGURE 20: THE AT-GRADE PORTION OF THE DEQUINDRE CUT NEAR THE DETROIT RIVERFRONT. PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR 2013.

Although it lacks design flourishes, the Dequindre Cut is not aesthetically barren. During construction, graffiti under the bridges that was not deemed offensive was retained (though a few bridges were removed, the retaining walls and their graffiti remain). Today, the DRFC curates the graffiti, allowing certain graffiti to stay and inviting artists and others to create specific installations. As one walks or rides through the Dequindre Cut, the almost monotonous simplicity and openness are broken by the closed-in spaces of the overpasses with colorful and varied artwork. The DRFC describes the space as “[w]ell-known for its examples of urban artwork and graffiti” (“DEQUINDRE CUT,” n.d.), and one commentator describes it as an “art

park” (Wasacz, 2005). The graffiti not only brings art into the experience, it also connects the Dequindre Cut with its grittier urban past and makes it, like the High Line, a partly curated aesthetic experience.



FIGURE 21: DEQUINDRE CUT PASSING UNDER JEFFERSON AVENUE. PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR 2013.

Unlike the High Line, the Dequindre Cut does not put the surrounding city on display. It lacks the High Line’s sense of spatial compression and intensity, not to mention the distant, cropped views that are one of the High Line’s most stunning, striking features. Very little of the city is visible from inside the Dequindre Cut. Most of the nearby structures are low-slung and just barely visible. Except for the first few blocks to the south, phase one of the Dequindre Cut is surrounded by a mix of residential neighborhoods, mostly medium- to low-density apartments, and a smattering of retail. Most of the directly abutting neighborhoods were rebuilt in various

urban renewal programs starting in the 1950s (the most famous being the Mies van der Rohe-designed Lafayette Park) and can generally be described as stable middle to lower-middle income. The most visible structures are some high-rise apartment buildings along the south side, such as the modernist Lafayette Towers, which loom lonely in the area's skyline. Twenty-five feet below, surrounded mostly by green space and sky, one sees and hears little of the city above.



FIGURE 22: DEQUINDRE CUT. PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR 2013.

There is very little street life when one emerges from any of the entrances of the Dequindre Cut. The connections to the street level from the Dequindre Cut typically occur in large intersections, with few destinations or even structures nearby. Phase one ends at Gratiot Avenue, which borders an industrial and market area. The path next emerges at street level at a sprawling, rubble-strewn lot and large, windswept road, though there are a public park and playfield nearby. To the northwest of the end of phase one is the historic Eastern Market area, which contains a long-standing produce market and has many similarities to what the Meatpacking District and West Chelsea were like before the High Line. It is undergoing a highly praised revitalization. A “live, work, play” district, oriented around the market and specialty food production, is being promoted by the Eastern Market Corporation, with the Dequindre Cut as a central amenity playing a role in the vision. With two new entrances, the phase two extension of the Dequindre Cut passes through this district, which greatly enhances its amenities.



FIGURE 23: CURATED GRAFFITI ON THE DEQUINDRE CUT. PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR 2012.

Unlike the below-grade section of the first phase, phase two has a series of large industrial buildings that abut the path, providing a little more visual and spatial enclosure and variety. Eventually, these buildings' reuse will provide a little taste of the voyeurism provided by the High Line. At the northern end, where it meets Mack Avenue, the Dequindre Cut returns to grade. This extension of the Dequindre Cut, while following the same basic design layout as the first phase, has some more sophisticated design elements. The lights and benches are more designedly, and the mostly rebuilt bridges are adorned with attractive arches and railings. Concrete retaining walls have been replaced with attractive and bright rough-cut blocks. There is more signage and even a few new landscape design touches, such as decorative wire-wrapped stones at the entrances. A small plaza with picnic tables and sunscreens near the northern end

provides a gathering area, and trees have been planted in the middle of the space in some areas. These are small but notable upgrades in the design of this significantly more expensive but shorter addition to the linear park.

Overall, the Dequindre Cut provides an enjoyable and straightforward experience; even with its slightly embellished extension, it is refreshingly simple compared to the High Line. It is an escape from the generally gritty and seemingly endless streets of urban Detroit above, and Woiwode has praised its “tranquility” – a term seldom used to describe the High Line. It has been very well received by the public and, in a city known for its sparse population density, the greenway is crowded with bikers and walkers on most nice summer afternoons. The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy maintains and secures the Dequindre Cut assiduously and, despite early fears, it does not have a reputation for being disorderly or unsafe. As it is not a particularly long route, even with the extension, most users, particularly cyclists, appear to use it in conjunction with the riverfront walk and its adjoining parks.

Connection to the High Line

Despite some significant parallels, the direct connection between the Dequindre Cut and the High Line is not obvious. The High Line’s success did not directly inspire or motivate the creation of the Dequindre Cut, and those who worked on the project did not follow a pre-conceived model; instead, they referred to precedents only after the project was established. Woiwode and Scott point to the Midtown Greenway in Minneapolis, Minnesota as a key urban precedent. The Midtown Greenway is a 5.7-mile rails-to-trails project in Minneapolis in a mostly below-grade corridor. Its first phase was completed in 2000 and its final phase in 2007, which makes it a potential antecedent to the High Line. However, there is no evidence of a direct connection between the High Line and the Midtown Greenway, other than a broad connection

related to ideas and movements (though some post hoc comparisons have been made). At first glance, this would seem to be the case with the High Line and the Dequindre Cut. Clearly, they are related by their ideas about rails-to-trails, urban amenities, and movement through the urban environment. But upon further investigation, their relationship is far deeper in two respects.

First, it is a little-known fact that Woiwode communicated with FHL's Robert Hammond while the two projects took shape. Woiwode read about the efforts behind the High Line in the *Wall Street Journal* or another national news outlet in the early 2000s (he is unsure exactly which media outlet and when). Intrigued, he contacted FHL and began corresponding with Robert Hammond. Although the Dequindre Cut and the High Line seem like vastly different projects in vastly different contexts, Woiwode and Hammond considered them "kindred projects" for "true neighborhood and community transformation." They corresponded for approximately 7-10 years and finally met a few years after their projects opened. This direct connection not only places the High Line within the larger urban greenway movements, it also points to the importance of the High Line's context as a center of national media attention. The High Line's place on the world stage was key to its placement at the center of the growth of the urban greenways/rails-to-trails movement.

Second, while the High Line did not play a role in inspiring the Dequindre Cut or even bolstering the first phase of its construction (beyond the moral support and information sharing between Woiwode and Hammond), it played a crucial role in interpreting the Dequindre Cut and bolstering its expansion. The Dequindre Cut stood on its own as an urban amenity in Detroit, and it was well received at its initial opening. But Detroit was a city famously laid to waste by deindustrialization and white flight. It was in the process of massively reorganizing itself under contemporary neoliberal urbanism, and was concentrating on attracting the creative class and

reasserting itself on the world stage as a site for investment. Thus, the Dequindre Cut became one of the symbols of a new future for Detroit and part of the re-narration of Detroit as an urban place that was attractive and open for business. Local media quickly began to build the narrative. The day before the first phase opened, well-known veteran Detroit journalist and author John Gallagher (2009) published an article titled “The Dequindre Cut: Pathways of the Future: Abandoned Rail Line is Next to Open.” Another article, this one in the *Michigan Chronicle* and by corporate leader and local booster Faye Nelson, hailed the Dequindre Cut as a sign that “good things are happening in Detroit” (2009, p. C.10).

But little connected these assertions to the world stage. When Detroit celebrated the opening of the Dequindre Cut, the world was marveling at the opening of New York City’s High Line. Thus, the Dequindre Cut came to be understood in relation to the High Line. Popular discourse and then the news media began to compare the Dequindre Cut to the High Line and assert a connection. Early examples come from places like message boards and blogs. For example, in a once-popular message board called *DetroitYES!*, multiple comments on a 2009 post about the Dequindre Cut compared it to the High Line. One called it “[o]ur own little ‘High Line,’” another wrote that “as one who looks at the High Line website wistfully every few weeks, I share your hopes for the DC [Dequindre Cut],” one commented about loving “to see it turn into something like the high line [sic],” and yet another boasted that the Dequindre Cut had the potential to be even better than the High Line (“JOIN IN TOMORROW!: Dequindre Trail Expansion To Open,” n.d.). These are some of the many early connections between the High Line and the Dequindre Cut.

This connection was boosted by the event “Beyond the High Line: Transforming Detroit,” which took place on the High Line in July, 2012. It was part of a series by FHL that

highlighted “adaptive reuse” projects in other cities around the world. On this date, FHL, in partnership with the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land, hosted a presentation about Detroit. Part of the presentation included the Dequindre Cut and was given by Faye Alexander Nelson on behalf of the DRFC. She described the project to the crowd “as our version of the High Line” (Friends of the High Line, 2012). The Dequindre Cut was a minor part of the presentation, but local media and blogs focused on the connection between the Dequindre Cut and the mothership – the High Line. After the event, interest in a relationship began to appear more frequently in media and blogs. In the local online publication *Hell Yeah Detroit*, for example, Rusty Young (2013) wrote of the hope he found in seeing how the solutions to urban renewal in New York, such as the High Line, are already nascently present in Detroit in places like the Dequindre Cut. In the same year, Woiwode (2013) published an article in *Mode Shift*, a local online “hub” about community health and activity in Michigan, that directly associated the High Line, Chicago’s Bloomingdale Trail, and the Dequindre Cut as a related forms of placemaking.

The connection between the High Line and the Dequindre Cut grew beyond blogs and quips. In his 2013 book, *Revolution Detroit*, John Gallagher equated the Dequindre Cut and High Line as urban solutions:

Architects and designers have come up with creative solutions to vacant areas long thought beyond help; there’s the decommissioned elevated train track in lower Manhattan that became the acclaimed High Line, a fabulously popular greenway, or the overgrown railroad right-of-way in Detroit that stood unused for years until it became the Dequindre Cut, a jogging, strolling, and biking path. (2013, p. 120)

The Dequindre Cut is an example of what Gallagher has recognized as “a new model of civic leadership” – essentially advanced neoliberalism through public-private partnerships that Detroit, due to its “extreme condition,” adopted earlier than most (2010, p. 143). Unintentionally, Gallagher also pointed out how Detroit was embracing its own context-specific form of something akin to the “Bloomberg way,” but without the central political figure. As June Manning Thomas would later argue, the Dequindre Cut was a key part of a larger reorganization of Detroit: “It became increasingly clear that the corporate sector and foundations were interested in certain portions of Detroit, as they knit together a new form of growth coalition” (2015b, p. 69). This process “involved creating or supporting organizations that took over certain traditional functions of city government,” such as the DRFC with the Dequindre Cut (Thomas, 2015b, p. 69). In fact, the City of Detroit was not even brought into the fold by the Dequindre Cut’s organizers until 2003 or 2004, well after foundations, nonprofits, and corporate-backed downtown community development corporations had established the project and its goals. The Dequindre Cut wove together “certain portions” of Detroit, like the Eastern Market, into a network of centrally located and revitalized spaces that were controlled by this new growth coalition.

Others also linked the Dequindre Cut and the High Line as urban interventions. In his well-regarded book, *Design After Decline*, Brent Ryan (2012, pp. 190–191) examines the physical redevelopment of Detroit and, in the process, connects the poor man’s Landscape Urbanism of the Dequindre Cut to the high-flying High Line. More examples abound, and they have made it more and more frequently into mainstream news and national conversation over time, which in turn increases its renown and association with the High Line. As a result, the two projects become more associated in the popular imagination. And, as New York is broadly seen

as a capital of urbanism and success, the association asserts certain conclusions about Detroit. Having something like a High Line symbolizes potential and world-class success. As Woiwode writes in the *Detroit Free Press* after the opening of the Dequindre Cut extension, the Dequindre Cut, like the transformative High Line, is “[a] symbol of Detroit’s promising future” (2016, p. A8).

That the public and its leaders began to see the Dequindre Cut through the lens of the High Line and New York’s world-class city status is not to say that this was the only way it was viewed. It also was not the key motivation for the extension of the Dequindre Cut, as the other motives around connectivity and activity remain. But its association with the High Line was still a factor in the Dequindre Cut’s popularity and therefore ensured its position as a viable project for public support in a city with severely limited resources and lots of needs. Although it was not originally closely associated with the High Line, the Dequindre Cut became closely linked with it in the public’s imagination, and this undoubtedly played a role in the Dequindre Cut’s position as a policy priority.

Not only did the association bolster the Dequindre Cut as a place and urban intervention; it also inflected the meaning and use of the Dequindre Cut. That the Dequindre Cut had become more than just a pleasant amenity and had an association with cool was not lost on the DRFC. The organization not only wanted to accentuate the Dequindre Cut’s popularity; it also needed to find ways to monetize its popularity to cover operating expenses. The once-simple Dequindre Cut started to get dressed up with events that added to its growing chic. In 2012, the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy started the Soiree on the Greenway, a part of the summer series organized by Riviere28, a group of boosters who help raise money for the Conservancy through hip fundraising events and activities. The Soiree on the Greenway was veritable catnip to the

young, creative-class patrons they aim to attract, including features such as craft cocktails, DJs, valet bike parking, and food trucks. Tickets for the 2015 event started at \$40 a person. While the Dequindre Cut remains modest and accessible by any standard, it has also, in a way, been spectacularized. The still-simple greenway has become a locus and symbol of urban cool and innovation – a connection to world status.

Examining the production of the Dequindre Cut provides hints about the High Line phenomenon's makeup. It highlights how the High Line, sometimes praised as a stroke of inventive genius, also came about at a time when movements around greenways, rails-to-trails, and the reuse of post-industrial infrastructure into amenities was coming to the forefront in other cities. It also points to similarities in the neoliberal revitalization context, as each park was influenced by existing local conditions as well as larger trends in political economy. The desire to monetize the Dequindre Cut within this context and the inevitability of its becoming a tool of place marketing also point to the process of spectacularization.

The Dequindre Cut is still a relatively modest place. It is enjoyable and can legitimately be understood as a place-specific intervention that promotes healthy communities (Jackson & Sinclair, 2012, p. 152) and plays a role in connecting people across various and socioeconomic lines (Thomas, 2015a, p. 203). But, in a world of circulating urban imaginaries of linear parks that remake urban places, the Dequindre Cut could not remain a simple, prosaic urban amenity. Detroit's rebirth as a city required globally consumable touchstones of success. It needed a contemporary cultural icon, and the Dequindre Cut's association with the High Line was key to producing it as one.

The Bloomingdale Trail

The Bloomingdale Trail is a 2.75-mile greenway built on an elevated railway and the centerpiece of a park project called the 606 that runs through four neighborhoods in northwest Chicago, Illinois. While originally envisioned only as a greenway project on an inactive elevated railway, the project expanded into the 606, adding new parks along the trail to create an open space system. The names “606” and “Bloomingdale Trail” are sometimes used interchangeably, but here the Bloomingdale Trail specifically refers to the greenway, and the 606 refers to the whole project of the greenway and interlinked parks.

Heralded by some as the third urban elevated railway turned into a park/greenway in the world, or the second in America, The Bloomingdale Trail is a significant descendant of the High Line. Like the idea for the Dequindre Cut, the idea for the Bloomingdale trail was not derived from the High Line, instead coming earlier from the greenway and rails-to-trail movement targeting urban centers. Unlike the idea for the Dequindre Cut, however, the idea for the Bloomingdale Trail emerged before the High Line’s celebrated opening. It is, therefore, an excellent example of a project bolstered by the High Line phenomenon. Chicago, America’s “second city,” helpfully illustrates the role of interurban competition for attention on the world stage. It also highlights key commonalities that the two projects developed, largely due to the High Line’s influence but also because of essential contemporary socio-political dynamics. The project’s expansion into the 606, and the particulars of its development trajectory, show the tight intertwining of the contemporary neoliberal approach to urban redevelopment, specifically as it is embodied in the Bloomberg Way.

History

The Bloomingdale Trail began life as the Bloomingdale Line, which has a history similar to that of the High Line. Chicago, like New York but ascending later, was a key center of goods movement in the United States. With a prime location between the early industrial centers of the eastern United States and fertile farms of the plains, as well as a water link to the vital Mississippi and natural portage on the Great Lakes, “Chicago was destined by geography and technology to become the most important transportation center in the American interior” (D. Young, 1998, p. 3). Railroads were key to its economic and population boom in the second half of the 1800s and early 1900s; “[b]ecause of railroads, Chicago grew from a minor lake port to the largest city in the U.S. Interior within about half a decade” (D. Young, 1998, p. 29). To this day, Chicago “is considered the most important railroad center in North America” (Chicago Park District, 2011, p. 11) and retains a complicated and extensive railroad infrastructure.

While it was nowhere near as vital to goods movement in its industrial heyday as the High Line was, the Bloomingdale Line was still a vital part of the development of Chicago’s industrial economy and its outlying areas. The line was first completed at grade in 1874 by the Chicago and Pacific Railroad Company, which was later taken over by the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad Company (Banich, n.d.). It was part of the railroad’s larger service to areas north and west of Chicago and met up with multiple north-south lines leading to downtown Chicago. The Bloomingdale Line was named after the east-west Bloomingdale Road, now Bloomingdale Avenue, which it followed. The west end of the Bloomingdale Line started in the Galewood neighborhood, intersected a north-south rail line on the western side of the Logan Square community area, and then intersected another north-south rail line at the east end of the

Logan Square community area. From there, it ran to the North Branch of the Chicago River to connect to another north-south line (Talbot, 1904).

Originally planned for both passenger and freight traffic, the line had three passenger stations along what is now the Bloomingdale Trail, and a major rail yard was later added at Galewood on its western end (Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry & Committee of Investigation on Smoke Abatement and Electrification of Railway Terminals, 1911). The line became a principal link between the rail yard, the major north-south lines, and the heavily industrial North Branch of the Chicago River. Unlike the High Line, this new rail infrastructure did not lead to the swift conversion of its neighboring residential neighborhoods into industrial districts. The Bloomingdale Line had no major branches, and industrial development hewed close to the line, leaving the rest of the surrounding areas primarily residential. As a 1904 map shows, except for the line's juncture with the eastern trunk line and the North Branch of the Chicago, there were less than 25 industrial sites next to or within a couple of blocks of the line (Talbot, 1904). The passenger service provided to this area of the city was vital to the residential development of the surrounding area (Davis, 1965, p. 59). Until then, this area had very little transit service and was cut off from the central business district due to limited crossing points on the Chicago River.

Although it provided new connectivity, the line was not well received by the existing residents. Chicagoans as a whole quickly tired of living along railways:

The noise from steam locomotives was a transient problem, but the smoke and soot fallout from their stacks was omnipresent . . . Although their electrification eliminated fly-ash emissions, the suburbs resorted to coating streets with oil to keep down dust.

Housewives along the lines complained that the oily residue somehow ended up in their homes, which then required frequent cleaning. (D. Young, 1998, p. 67)

The Bloomingdale Line received rather vociferous opposition from its very inception (“A COUP D’ETAT,” 1874; Banich, n.d.). Before the city ordinance that allowed the railroad’s construction along Bloomingdale Road was passed, residents organized against it (“A fifteenth ward protest,” 1872) and, after the authorizing legislation passed in 1872, two residents took to the courts in unsuccessful bids to stop the railroad (Banich, n.d.; “THE LAW COURTS.,” 1872). Once approved, the railroad started construction in the middle of the night to limit attention from residents; small riots followed the next day (Banich, n.d.).

Like the pre-High Line at-grade rail lines of Manhattan’s West Side, the at-grade Bloomingdale Line also infuriated its neighbors by slowing traffic, causing frequent crashes with other vehicles, and killing and dismembering people along the way (Banich, n.d.). Frustration with the railroads was not unique to the Bloomingdale Line by any stretch and was a citywide concern: “As the city continued to grow in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the railroad plant became such a constricting factor, especially on street traffic, that after 1890 the city forced the railroads to elevate hundreds of miles of lines so that street traffic could pass beneath them” (D. Young, 1998, p. 33). Residents along the Bloomingdale Line broke out in at least a few protests about its impact on the neighborhood (Banich, n.d.). In 1907, for example, “[t]hirty determined housewives, mostly veterans of a similar battle two years ago, reinforced by a few men and sufficient boys and girls to make the attacking crowd about 150 strong” blocked a crew from adding a switch to the railroad in protest (“WOMEN PROVOKE RIOT CALL,” 1907).

The tide turned against at-grade railroads in Chicago, whose owners had tried to avoid the costly infrastructure needed to separate their lines from the city streets. The Bloomingdale

Line was able to hold out until 1910 when the City of Chicago required its elevation (Banich, n.d.). Elevating a working railroad line down the middle of a working road provided some engineering challenges, and the Line's elevation became part of a larger project by its owner that also elevated a connecting line (Universal Portland Cement Company, 1914, p. 144).

The Bloomingdale Line was raised using cement retaining walls around earthen fill. Unlike the High Line, the Bloomingdale Line has no space under the tracks except where it crosses roads. This gives it a significantly different permeability and openness than that of the High Line's trestle-type viaduct. To accommodate existing customers, sidings were extended along embankments or trestles leading into industrial sites. While not as impressive engineering as the High Line's pulling directly into warehouses three stories above grade, elevating the Bloomingdale Line was still an impressive project and a point of engineering pride. The combined project required 300,000 yards of concrete to create 13 miles of retaining walls and 71 underpasses (Universal Portland Cement Company, 1914, p. 144). Construction used an innovative "bulk concrete" system that the concrete manufacturer Universal Portland Cement Company promoted in its *Universal Bulletin* journal as a model (Universal Portland Cement Company, 1914). The Bloomingdale Line's elevation was completed in 1915, elevating 2.4 miles and eliminating 35 grade crossings ("Railway Age Gazette," 1915, p. 628).

Despite the Bloomingdale Line viaduct's importance as an engineering improvement and achievement, Chicago's boosters did not particularly celebrate it. It was, in many ways, a pretty ordinary part of the Chicago landscape by 1915. Still, these structures and other rail facilities played a key role in shaping modern Chicago's neighborhoods: "The resulting railroad moraines, pierced occasionally by viaducts, cut the city into pieces and effectively defines neighborhoods until the coming expressways chopped it up even more" (D. Young, 1998, p. 33). The

Bloomington Line viaduct has numerous streets undercrossing it, but visually it remains an important “edge,” to borrow a term from Kevin Lynch (1960). These types of structures were key in shaping the mental geography of Chicago neighborhoods that persists today.

The Bloomington Line’s passenger service found itself facing competition from other passenger services, and industrial revenue became critical. The Metropolitan West Side Elevated railway extended service in 1895 to Logan Square (now the Damen-O’Hare stop) and added the Humboldt Park Branch, which ran parallel to the Bloomington Line just south and half a block from Humboldt Park (D. Young, 1998, p. 59). This provided commuters with a more frequent alternative route to the city center. (The line was closed in 1952 by its owner, the Chicago Transit Authority.) Over time, the industrial importance of the Bloomington Line became paramount, as sites along the Line were key opportunities for industrial development and production that needed rail access (“FACTORY SITES SHOW ACTIVITY,” 1916). The line continued as an active industrial rail link until 2001, but it was financially troubled for much of its existence.

Like all rail systems, Chicago’s rail activity suffered from changes in technology and distribution patterns. By the 1960s, the Bloomington Line was seeing less use, some of its industrial customers started changing from trains to vehicular transportation even though they were adjacent to the railroad (Banich, n.d.), and the owner of the Bloomington Line went bankrupt for a third and final time in 1977 (Banich, n.d.). The decline of the Bloomington Line also coincided with the decline of its surrounding neighborhoods. An urban renewal plan the City of Chicago and a citizen advisory panel created for the Near Northwest Side (which includes the neighborhoods adjacent to the Bloomington Line) envisioned relocating the industries along the Bloomington Line and creating a modern industrial park elsewhere

(Eastman, 1964). With the passenger service long gone, the line and its industry were seen as a detriment to the neighborhood's revival instead of an asset. Though urban renewal did not remove the industry along the line as planned, the City of Chicago changed the zoning of most of the parcels to residential between 1990 and 2000, sun-setting the vast majority of industrial uses in the neighborhood (Banich, n.d.). After over 125 years of service, the Bloomingdale Line's owner, Canadian Pacific, ended freight service on the line.

As in the case of the High Line, the surrounding communities cut desire lines (pathways worn in the landscape that show visitors preferred paths) on the abandoned Bloomingdale Line. Relatively easy to access with nothing to prevent trespassing, it became an informal neighborhood amenity – but hardly a secret. In Taylor's 2010 *New York Times* article about cities "looking up" and following the example of the High Line, the lead photos in the online and print versions show informal users of the Bloomingdale Line in action (2010a, 2010b, p. A1).

Reuse

The Bloomingdale Line's contemporary neighbors no longer felt that the abandoned line was a drag on the neighborhood, though there were some concerns about its safety at night (Greenfield, 2009). Still, it was obsolete infrastructure, and the Chicago Department of Transportation had reportedly considered tearing down the line to increase east-west road capacity. But that was an expensive proposition, and the neighborhood was not clamoring for it. Additionally, the land underneath the line was a narrow strip between roads – not a particularly attractive real estate opportunity. This meant it was both inoffensive and obdurate enough to avoid removal.

In line with the Dequindre Cut, the deep origins of the reuse of the Bloomingdale Line are primarily from government- and non-profit-led open space and greenway planning efforts.

The Bloomingdale Trail can be linked to regional greenways/rail-to-trails and open space planning that occurred over approximately 20 years. There are multiple claims to the origin of the first mention of the idea to reuse the line. One local news outlet reported that it came from a 1997 update of a regional trails plan by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), “which noted the line’s potential as a greenway” (Greenfield, 2009). However, it does not appear in the Update (D. Anderson, Mariner, & Heringa, 1997), and, according to one of the authors of the Update, its exclusion was intentional. The 2009 Update envisions the Bloomingdale Trail as an element of a “Primary Regional Trail System” (*Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails Plan: 2009 Update*, 2009). A primary trail is one that makes critical connections to the regional trail system. The Update also shows a link to an existing primary trail on the east side of the North Branch of the Chicago River, providing access to the lakefront trail, and a proposed non-primary trail along the Bloomingdale Line from Humbolt Park to another north-south trail at the line’s western end. Importantly, the plan proposes a trail along the Boulevard system, which would link with the Bloomingdale Line, though oddly this trail is marked as existing in the Update. It does not, however, appear that CMAP is the source of the idea for the Bloomingdale Trail.

According to Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail, an advocacy organization for converting the Bloomingdale Line into a greenway, the earliest idea for the line comes from the City’s Bike Plan in the 1990s (Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail, n.d.). The City of Chicago created the *Bike 2000 Plan* in 1992 to lay out a vision for improving biking in the city, including the intention to “[c]onvert abandoned and under-utilized rail corridors into bicycle trails,” but it does not mention the Bloomingdale Line specifically (Mayor’s Bicycle Advisory Council, 1992, p. 4). The Chicago Department of Transportation could not locate additional planning documents. The

Bloomington Line is mentioned in the *Bike 2015 Plan* as one of a number of priority projects from the *Chicago Trails Plan* of 2005 (City of Chicago, 2005, p. 8).

One of the key planning efforts undergirding the eventual development of the Bloomington Trail was a major open space planning effort undertaken by the City of Chicago in the late 1990s: the 143-page *City Space* plan (City of Chicago, Chicago Park District, & Forest Preserve District of Cook County, 1998). Finished in 1998, this extensive document, which was five years in the making, lays out a comprehensive plan for open space and connectivity in Chicago. While the plan does not mention the Bloomington Trail specifically, it still lays out some of the key park planning themes that were put in motion in the Bloomington Trail/606.

First, the plan claims that the need for parks has changed and therefore new types of parks are necessary, a claim that promoters of other Chicago projects repeated:

People's use and need for open space has evolved in the hundred years since Chicago's historic park system was established. Today, people need safe trails for bicycling and walking; places to garden; easy and pleasant access to the wilderness of forest preserves; more downtown plazas and green space; neighborhoods that look like someone cares for them, with planters, trees and flowers; and industrial corridors that are well-landscaped and conducive to retaining their existing businesses and capturing new ones. (City of Chicago et al., 1998, p. ii)

This assertion sets the course for an alternative to the expanding Chicago's traditional, largely Olmsted-inspired park system, though why these particular needs and wants were incompatible with it or even truly new is not clear. Next, the report goes on to assert that "[i]n today's mobile society, sufficient open space is an economic necessity" that will influence location decisions by companies and individuals (City of Chicago et al., 1998, p. ii). This reflects a neoliberal (re)turn

to parks not primarily as social reform or public good, but as an economic good. This theme becomes central to the production of the Bloomingdale Trail and 606. A last important point is the report's assertion that "Chicago lags behind other metropolitan areas . . . ranking 18th out of 20 cities of comparable size, according to one study that assessed the ratio of open space acres to population" (City of Chicago et al., 1998, p. ii). This theme of interurban competition also plays a key role in the Bloomingdale Trail/606 project.

The report expands on this theme, pointing to a National Recreation and Parks Association guideline of 6 to 10 acres per 1,000 residents, while Chicago, by 1990, had only 4.13 acres per 1,000 residents (City of Chicago et al., 1998, p. 18). Two of the community areas that the Bloomingdale Line goes through, Logan Square and Humboldt Park, had fewer than two acres per 1,000 residents, and West Town had sub areas with no parkland within one mile (City of Chicago et al., 1998, p. 24). Logan Square was named the most park-poor neighborhood per 1,000 residents and described as having the city's most underserved population by proximity (City of Chicago et al., 1998, p. 25). West Town was not underserved, but an estimated 3,500 of its residents had poor proximity to park space.

While proximity measures are helpful, the community area measures – one of which has been used to justify the 606 in Logan Square – can be misleading. Humboldt Park, one of the other largest open spaces in the city, is in the West Town community area and its presence makes West Town park rich, yet it is on the border of Hermosa and Logan Square and does not count towards their totals. The metric for open space goals in the plan is acres per resident in community areas: two per 1,000 in 2010 and five per 1,000 in 2020 (City of Chicago et al., 1998, p. 27). The plan that designates the Logan Square Community Area as the most underserved in the city, as well as the general themes about what types of open spaces should be prioritized,

have worked their way into the overall thinking about parks in Chicago and play out in the Bloomingdale Trail and 606.

Despite its importance in setting the stage for the Bloomingdale Trail's creation, the City Space Plan did not identify the Bloomingdale Line as a potential greenway, though it did identify many other rail corridors as targets (City of Chicago et al., 1998, p. 35). It also noted the importance of the Boulevard system in its network (City of Chicago et al., 1998, p. 51) – an Olmsted-inspired system of wide boulevards, with squares and ample medians, in northwest Chicago. The City Space Plan's designation of the areas around the Bloomingdale Trail as park poor and its general approach to park planning undergird the eventual program for the 606. At this point, however, the Bloomingdale Line did not stand out as an opportunity to achieve those goals.

The earliest explicit mention of reusing the Bloomingdale Line is from the 2004 Logan Square Open Space Plan, which laid out projects for park improvement and expansion in the community area (City of Chicago, 2004). A “New Bloomindale Linear Park” on the abandoned rail line was one of the plan's 11 recommendations. The recommendation focused on active transportation potential unimpeded by cars, views, and potential access to the river. It makes no claims to precedents, save two existing local bicycle bridges. One of the lead authors of the section on the Bloomingdale Trail was Kathleen Dickhut, then an Assistant Commissioner and today a Deputy Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Planning and Development. According to Dickhut, the initial idea of the Bloomingdale Trail grew primarily out of the greenway/rails-to-trails planning movement. When developing the recommendation, however, she searched for precedents that could inform how they might use an elevated structure, which lacked well-known precedents. At first, her team looked to medieval city walls for inspiration,

though they did not quite fit what they had in mind. There was also an intern working in the office from Paris, France, who mentioned that there was something like what they were thinking about in Paris – the Promenade Plantée. As a result, and well before the completion of the High Line, the Promenade Plantée helped bolster the feasibility of the Bloomingdale Trail as a viable project.

Initial estimates of the cost of the Bloomingdale Trail project, before the addition of the 606, were \$15 million to \$20 million (Pietrusiak, 2004, p. 16). The majority of the greenway and park planning that undergirds the original Bloomingdale Trail proposal happened under long-time Mayor Richard M. Daley, who held office from 1989 to 2011. After the Logan Square Open Space Plan was adopted in 2003, it seemed likely that the plan, like most efforts of its type, would move along slowly – if at all. The Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), seeing an opportunity to promote non-motorized options, was on board and provided some initial funding (as well as including it in the 2005 Bike Plan), but the project’s completion was far from a sure thing. The two grants that CDOT applied for early on were turned down.

Around that time, however, the Bloomingdale Line was already getting its own “friends” group: Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail. Formed in 2003 by a group of community members around the line, it became, according to their website, “an advocacy organization who would champion the project for the next decade, ensuring that the vision for a multi-use park and trail network remained a priority” (Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail, n.d.). The cofounders of the organization were Ben Helphand and Josh Deth. Deth, owner of the successful Revolution Brewing micro-brewery in Logan Square near the Bloomingdale Trail, has a Master of Planning and Policy from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). While at UIC, he worked with Professor Janet Smith on a thesis “to revive an old proposal to turn 3 miles of elevated train

tracks, no longer in use, into a place for recreation” (Padilla, n.d.). This description comes from UIC’s own department of Planning and Policy website and is undated, but the earliest it could have been posted is 2014. Notably, it crafts an origin story that puts their alumnus in the hero position. That origin story never took hold, but the development of a community voice for the project helped bring the Bloomingdale Trail to the fore of potential projects in the neighborhoods. Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail continued to push for attention for the project, engaging the Trust for Public Land (TPL) as a partner in 2006.

TPL’s addition was critical, as it committed resources to outreach, increasing community awareness and interest. TPL is a national nonprofit organization that helps facilitate and fund the creation of public parks and open space. The organization’s resources and staff increased outreach to the neighborhoods and developed wider community support for the project. In concert with Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail and TPL, the Chicago Architectural Club (CA), a local design organization, organized a design competition for the Bloomingdale Trail. In a process much like the High Line’s design competition, 26 designs were displayed for the public from May through August of 2007. The entries were rather tame in comparison to the High Line competition’s wild entries, and the whole affair was not nearly as sensational. It was intended to be more practical. Yet it did further the conversation and bolster the trail’s viability as a project to policymakers and community members.

Like the entries in the High Line competition, the entries in the Bloomingdale Trail competition were made into a book. Published in 2009, the book acknowledges the High Line as a potent force in shaping thinking around the Bloomingdale Trail’s production. In the Foreword, Mohsen Mostafavi, Dean of Harvard Design School, compares the potential of the Bloomingdale Line to that of the High Line (Lyster, 2009, p. 8). Additionally, the CAC’s Co-President notes in

the book's introduction the importance of pre-existing but unnamed precedents and mentions that "New York's Highline [sic] was receiving positive press for rehabilitating a similar elevated structure into a park" (Lyster, 2009, p. 11). The book also includes a transcript of the review of the designs, in which commentators conspicuously wrestle with what the Bloomingdale Line would be in comparison to the High Line.

At this point, the Bloomingdale Trail project had momentum but was hardly a sure thing. There was real consternation that Mayor Daley would think it unworkable or too expensive (Lyster, 2009, pp. 50–51). As Helphand acknowledges, what "fast-tracked" the Bloomingdale Trail was the election of a new mayor in 2011 – Rahm Emanuel. Like New York's Mayor Bloomberg, Mayor Emanuel made the provision of park space a cornerstone of his campaign and vision for Chicago. The Bloomingdale Trail, like the High Line in New York, was a high-profile project that could be seen as innovative in an area already primed for rapid growth in real estate values.

As in the case of the High Line, the desire to transform the Bloomingdale Trail into a marquee project turned the plan from just a trail into a more robust system of a trail and adjoining small parks. While much of the project was led by City departments, in particular the Chicago Park District, TPL became a private partner, taking a key role in community outreach, fundraising, and more. This converted the project from a public one into a public-private partnership. Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail stayed involved but did not have an official role in the production of the project. Later, it would become an official advisory organization for the park. In 2013, the project was renamed the 606 – the first three digits of Chicago's zip codes. This more general signifier appropriately signals how the project transformed from plans for

addressing neighborhood park and active space needs into a symbolic project for the city and region.

Thanks to the new Mayor's attention, the project expanded and moved forward quickly. Unlike the High Line, the 606 project (which includes the Bloomingdale Trail) did not have face many obstacles other than funding. As Helphand recalls, they did not have to fight battles with the City or local residents. The Canadian Pacific Railroad, the unencumbered owner of the Bloomingdale Line, agreed to sell it to the city for one dollar (Pietrusiak, 2004, p. 16). But the project still needed money, so Mayor Emanuel steered city resources toward it. Now a public-private endeavor and carrying the favor of the new Mayor (and former White House Chief of Staff for President Barack Obama), the project attracted private corporate and philanthropic donations. In the end, the full 606 Project cost an estimated \$95 million. The trail and some of the parks of the 606 opened on June 6, 2015 at a cost of \$75 million. The City provided \$5 million, a Federal Highway Administration grant for Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality provided \$50 million, and corporate and foundation sources provided a not inconsiderable \$20 million.

The opening of the 606 was a major event. Mary-Beth White, the project manager for TPL, and Ben Helphand made remarks. U.S. Senator Dick Durbin started his speech with a riff on Helphand's name, remarking how fitting the words "help" and "hand" are, in praise of his work. After congratulating the community for its hard work, Durbin pointed out his own role in getting federal transportation dollars, which provided approximately half of the project's funding. Mayor Rahm Emanuel, speaking last, congratulated the residents and communities, saying, "this is your park." His remarks emphasized the ongoing park and open space accomplishments under his leadership, saying that he was "once again reclaiming the public

spaces of the city” and mentioning the city’s other major open space projects that were converting formerly private industrial sites into public parks. As he is often dubbed “Mayor 1%,” the emphasis on converting private space to public space, even when the public had already been using it for decades, is notable.



FIGURE 24: MAYOR RAHM EMANUEL SPEAKING AT THE RIBBON CUTTING FOR THE 606 (BLOOMINGDALE TRAIL). PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR 2015.

After the opening remarks, the dignitaries, followed by an organized bike parade and the rest of the crowd, headed onto the trail. Curious bikers and walkers had already crowded the path, and a festive day ensued. Walking around, one could overhear people commenting on what they saw and, on multiple occasions, talking about how the trail compared to the High Line. Some focused on the differences, while others boasted how much better it was than its storied predecessor. Its comparison to the High Line was clearly a topic of interest among many curious

visitors. A packed day included events and activities spread along the 606. The main event was a festival along Humboldt Boulevard at its intersection with the 606 (as no part of the 606 is spacious enough to accommodate such an event). There were two large stages on either end, and food, craft beer, and a variety of booths for neighborhood groups, advocacy groups, merchants and other various vendors lined the boulevard. Different locations along the trail and the rest of the 606 hosted everything from poetry to button making to “big city wilderness tours” to drum circles to mini-parades (*Guide to Opening Festivities*, 2015). While there was wide variety of activities and events, there was an emphasis on the arts, multicultural events and, in particular, inclusion of the surrounding Latino community, which had some trepidation about how the project might exacerbate gentrification. The vast festivities not only represented the desire to represent Chicago as an international city but also spectacularized the 606 to some degree. While certainly not over the top, the day was hardly a small celebration for what was originally planned as primarily a new neighborhood amenity.

The Experience of the Bloomingdale Trail

Led by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Bloomingdale Trail’s and the 606’s design is rather straightforward and in many ways closer in style to the expansion of the Dequindre Cut than to any part of the High Line. On June 6, 2015, in the opening rush, the space’s plantings had mostly just been installed – some as recently as the night before. While the project lacked shade, its plantings promised to provide a lush, shadier feeling over time. But at its core, the Bloomingdale Trail looks much like a typical greenway, elevated 16 feet above the streets below. Its main design component is a two-lane concrete path running down the center, mostly straight, with plantings on either side. Details include large medallion mile markers embedded in the pavement, sleek silver lights, and simple modern railings. Where the embankment was widened

to accommodate rail sidings, there are additional plantings, along with occasional undulating land masses or smaller winding side paths and benches. At intersections, there are angular concrete and long wood benches facing down the streets and emphasizing the views. Where there is sufficient room at any of the 13 entrances, the path dips approximately halfway to grade to meet a sloping side entry path that allows for easy bicycle access. Not only do the paths provide entrance, they break up the visual lines of what is an almost entirely straight shot from one side to another.



FIGURE 25: THE WESTERN END OF THE 606 (BLOOMINGDALE TRAIL) ON OPENING DAY. PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR 2015.

The 606 runs through three Chicago community areas: Logan Square, West Town, and Humboldt Park. Most Chicagoans would consider it to run through four neighborhoods: Logan Square, Humboldt Park, Bucktown, and Wicker Park. The eastern end of the Bloomingdale Trail

starts near the Dan Ryan Expressway at the new Walsh Park (also part of the 606 project) in the highly gentrified Bucktown and Wicker Park areas. Wicker Park, considered one of the most “hipster” neighborhoods in the Midwest, is filled with bars, restaurants, and boutiques, and Richard Lloyd has described the particular mix of bohemian cultural innovation and post-Fordist development that has emerged in this area as “neo-bohemia” (Lloyd, 2008). This area’s building stock has undergone extensive redevelopment, with many of the formerly small homes remade into tightly packed townhomes and small apartment buildings. It now borders on being more upscale than hipster. The mostly three- to four-story buildings that line the Bloomingdale Trail provide the best glimpses into homes along the line, but with much less height and drama than those of the High Line.

One of the most dramatic parts of the trail is there, on the east end, where the Chicago Transit Authority Blue Line (an elevated train) crosses noisily above the trail. An energetic drama is created by the confluence of the slightly larger buildings, a view of the distant skyscrapers of the downtown Chicago, and the clatter of elevated trains overhead. Some blocks of homes near the eastern end closely front the trail, but elsewhere, most face the perpendicular roads with a more generous separation between the buildings and trail. Moving west, the visitor enters the Logan Square neighborhood, which covers the largest part of the trail: a rapidly changing area where the mostly lower-income Latino areas to the west and the already gentrified areas to the east meet. One local Chicago urban news blog described it as the “de facto Midwest capital of hipsterdom” (“Is Chicago’s Logan Square Neighborhood Now the Hipster Mecca of the Midwest?,” 2014).

As one moves west into Logan Square and then Humboldt Park, the homes become smaller and only the occasional apartment building or industrial building gives a sense of

enclosure. Even at its most dense, the Bloomingdale Trail gives little sense of the canyon effect of the High Line. Here, on a weekend evening in summer, visitors on the trail get to peer down at the community barbecues taking place on the streets below and hear Latin music waft up from the neighborhoods. One gets the feeling of being a little above the neighborhood, but not enclosed. The views of the streets below are interesting but not dramatic.



FIGURE 26: THE 606 (BLOOMINGDALE TRAIL) WHERE THE ELEVATED BLUE LINE TRAIN CROSSES OVER. PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR 2015.

Along the nearly 2.7-mile trail, there are 38 bridges and 13 entrances. There is direct access to four small and medium-sized parks. Two additional, connected small parks are planned. The North Humboldt Boulevard entrance is a direct connection to an existing open space Boulevard System and nearby Humboldt Park. North Humboldt Boulevard is part of the West Park System, an Olmsted-inspired open space system for the area that was completed at the

end of the 1800s. Here the Boulevard has a generous median that connects Humboldt Park to Palmer Square Park, which in turn connects to two other legs of the small open space system. This makes the 606, with its series of small open parks, legitimately embedded in and helping to create a large, connected open space network. This connection to an open space is an important characteristic of the 606, as some commentators have claimed that the 606 brings together the open space system with “an emerging fifth model – ecologically sustainable park – that has become an exemplar of landscape urbanism” (Sinha, 2014, p. 121). This is a conceptual stretch for a project that is very limited in its incorporation of the built environment outside its borders, but it does reveal the desire to link it to a fashionable design movement.

The trail ends to the west, in the still largely Latin American immigrant community of Humboldt Park, near Hermosa. There, the concentration of industrial buildings is higher, and the homes are more modest. The west end of the trail is marked by a mounded area with a sunken spiral walkway and seating – an attractive, though not flashy, marker of the western terminus. Compared to the High Line, the Bloomingdale Trail (and, by extension, the 606), is refreshingly simple in design and experience. It is more of an active recreation corridor than a promenade. In fact, when busy with cyclists and runners, it is not particularly amenable to strolling. Its lean simplicity defines it against more aggressively forward designs of contemporary symbolic public projects, such as Millennium Park, Chicago’s best-known contemporary public space.



FIGURE 27: JULIA DE BURGOS PARK, A SMALL PARK WITH PLAY AREA NEAR THE WEST END OF THE 606. PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR 2015.

Connection to the High Line

While the High Line is occasionally imprecisely identified as the inspiration for the Bloomingdale Trail (e.g., Kirk, 2013; Wang, 2013), its background shows that this was not the case. The actual connection between them is in many ways more interesting. The High Line, or more specifically the High Line as a worldwide phenomenon, bolstered and expanded the Chicago project. If it were not for the internationally renowned success of the High Line, the Bloomingdale Trail would likely have stayed on a slow path to fruition as a rather simple trail project, fitting squarely within the larger arc of the contemporary urban push by the rails-to-trails and greenways movements. But with the election Mayor Emanuel, a staunchly neoliberal Democrat who is, politically, remarkably akin to Michael Bloomberg, the trajectory of the

Bloomington Line project changed. Looking for his own signature project, Emanuel quickly embraced an opportunity to garner national attention, raise real estate values, and provide the community a desired public amenity.

Both interurban competition for attention on the world stage and investment dollars played a significant role in this dynamic. Chicago, famously nicknamed “the second city,” has for nearly two centuries been engaged in a rivalry with New York as the financial and cultural capital of the United States. It is no coincidence that Chicago raced to be the second American city with a High Line-like elevated park. The issue of how Chicago’s linear park might compare to the High Line came up as early as the CAC review, with one prescient commentator asking:

The whole thing [the Bloomington Trail] is elevated, the High Line is going to become the new type of park in multiple cities depending how well it develops in New York.

Everyone can do their version of it. Does it need to have some other kind of difference introduced, like producing hydrogen, producing agriculture, or reducing CO₂, that now being a park isn’t just good enough? (Lyster, 2009, p. 51)

From this perspective, Chicago could not simply have another High Line; it needed something better – or at least something different but equally appealing or spectacular in the eyes of the world. Four days before the grand opening of the 606, the *Chicago Tribune* ran an article calling it “Chicago’s response to Manhattan’s acclaimed High Line” (Kamin, 2015), with a related online slide show comparing the two projects (“Comparing the 606 to New York’s High Line park,” n.d.).



FIGURE 28: NEW HIGH-END HOUSING NEAR THE EAST END OF THE 606 (BLOOMINGDALE TRAIL). PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR 2015.

Mayor Emanuel’s deep political, business, and financial ties opened private resources for the project, converting it into an elite booster cause. At a fundraiser for the project (by then expanded but not yet renamed the 606) in “a swank private club” in Chicago’s high-end Gold Coast neighborhood, Emanuel’s Deputy Mayor Steve Koch outlined the pitch to an audience:

This will transform the city . . . It will make it a fundamentally different place. A lot of people are familiar with the High Line – this concept [is] far beyond that truly transformative project. . . . Someone will call you up and say ‘I want to see the city’. . . This is where you’ll go; this is the way you’ll do it.’ And I think people are going to come from all over the globe. . . . This is the High Line on steroids. (Lepeska, 2017)

Koch's speech hints at the importance of the Bloomingdale Trail's comparison to the High Line and the desire for Chicago to outdo its historical rival, New York. It also highlights the aspirations for global exposure and recognition. In a similar vein, Beth White has pitched the Bloomingdale Trail in ways that echo the sense of discovery and opening up parts of the city for visual consumption: "For years this has been invisible space . . . But you have this whole other vantage point of the city that you can't find anywhere else" (Ahmed-Ullah, 2008, p. 1.23).

The Bloomingdale Line's unusual views were not invisible to the people who had lived in the area and used it as an informal amenity for years. But its informality did not make it particularly successful at attracting people outside the surrounding neighborhoods. Even more to the point, its informality made it problematic to put the amenity on the tourist and investment map. In reality, the project was not only about opening new views and ways to experience the city; it was also about being able to market that experience and site. The project has proved successful at garnering attention on the world stage with national and international news outlets. The project's development received early coverage in outlets such as the *Wall Street Journal* (Chen, 2014) and London's *The Guardian* (Thompson, 2015); after its opening, it received strong praise from outlets such as Toronto's *National Post* (Brennan, 2015). Having succeeded in attracting the gaze of the world, the 606, like the High Line, was parlayed into a tool to transform the neighborhood, particularly when it comes to real estate investment.

While Mayor Emanuel promotes the 606 as a public amenity – which it undoubtedly is – it is also an example of the High Line phenomenon as an urban redevelopment tool. The intention was to draw more of the areas around the 606 into Chicago's north side real estate boom, which had been ramping up since the late 1980s. Wicker Park and West Town had already gentrified prior to the establishment of the 606 and, with land limited by the lake to the east,

price pressures were driving change west. The 606 became a tool for extending that transformation farther and faster. Logan Square, in particular, has become a hot spot for real estate – a process already in play but accelerated by the anticipation of the 606. In 2013, Redfin, a national real estate agency, deemed it one of the top ten “hottest neighborhoods” in the United States, with an over 20% increase in prices over the previous year (Ellis, 2013). While it remains difficult to separate the increase in real estate values in much of Chicago from the impact that came about due to the development of the 606, local real estate professionals, who monitor the market closely, picked up on its potential effect. As one local real estate agent put it in a local development publication: “Property values are bumping up on their own, but [The 606] is a contributing factor . . . It changes the way we feel buyers appreciate properties. It puts some places into play for people that maybe weren’t before” (Chang, 2013). An interview with a local couple in the same article provides a snapshot of how the 606 changed perceptions: “We want to live near the trail . . . We have faith in what it’s going to do in the areas nearby. It should enhance the area” (Chang, 2013).

This attention for the real estate industry has caused considerable concern among existing communities. A community organizer for Lucha, a local affordable housing services association that focuses mostly on the Latino community in Logan Square and Humboldt Park, emphasizes the clients’ mixed feelings. They appreciate and enjoy the amenity but are faced with pressing problems, like persistent neighborhood violence, finding childcare, and affording rent. After the opening celebration for the 606, which had a Lucha outreach booth, the organization posted a statement on its website about the project. It both praised the amenity and warned that “the process of gentrification (which often facilitates amenities such as the 606 Trail) also forces long-term residents to relocate (due to the resultant rent increases)” (“Lucha,” n.d.). Beth White,

while recognizing that the project can increase property values in the surrounding communities, maintains that “[t]he 606 will have a positive, sustainable economic impact” (Chang, 2013).

What a positive, sustainable economic impact means remains an open question, as there is much justified skepticism in the neighborhoods’ current lower-income and immigrant communities. As one community activist and long-time resident of Logan Square pointed out when speaking to a local news outlet: “What we’ve seen in the High Line and other development across the country is that when you create these kind of amenities, it’s almost to recruit a new set of people” (Thiel, 2015).



FIGURE 29: SOME PLAQUES RECOGNIZING DONORS ON THE 606 (BLOOMINGDALE TRAIL). PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR 2015.

While physically and contextually different than the High Line, the Bloomingdale Trail has morphed into something grander than originally planned, taking up the themes of the High

Line. It was bolstered by and swept into the High Line phenomenon. While not High Line inspired, it is an important project in that it is one of the first descendants with production thoroughly influenced by the High Line phenomenon. It serves as an example, along with the High Line, for other cities to emulate and use as justification for new public space projects in the same vein.

Extending the Family Tree

The Dequindre Cut and the 606 provide two examples of existing descendants of the High Line. Another descendant is Australia's Goods Line in Sydney, which is often described as the first post-High Line elevated linear park (making Chicago's 606 the third). The Goods Line opened in August 2015 and reuses an abandoned urban railway around Sydney Harbor, turning it into park space and a pedestrian network. Part of the Goods Line is a high-design, elevated linear park that is remarkably similar to the High Line, physically and aesthetically. Like the High Line, it is connected to a major museum, and new starchitect-designed buildings are already beginning to line it, such as the new Frank Gehry-designed business school for University of Technology Sydney. And, like the High Line, it is seen as both a public amenity and a real estate development catalyst. Unlike the High Line, however, the project was led by and will be managed by a public authority, not a public-private partnership. An initial survey of descendants hints that non-United States projects are less likely to carry forward the public-private partnership aspect of the High Line phenomenon.

The Goods Line has all the telltale signs of a project inspired by the High Line. It is an extension and renaming of an existing pedestrian network around Sydney's harbor, called the Ultimo Pedestrian Network (UPN). Its newfound attention, the extension of the network with an elevated portion (which was not included in the original UPN project), and its renaming to a

“line” in 2012 are telling. Well before the project’s completion, local media boasted that it would “rival New York’s famous High Line” (Gorman, 2015). The project manager acknowledges the High Line as a model, and Robert Hammond even visited the site while plans were being created in 2013 (Gorman, 2015). Once completed, it was picked up by media around the world. Now Sydney can boast its own High Line, one of the first to be completed after the original.

The descendants of the High Line covered here show the how the High Line phenomenon has invigorated and bolstered pre-established efforts rooted in the parks, industrial heritage, greenways, and rails-to-trails vein. But, as the family tree investigation has shown, they are just the tip of the iceberg. Many other projects are in various stages of idea generation, planning, and construction. Many appear to have essential similarities to the cases described above, while foregrounding other parts of the High Line phenomenon. For example, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Reading Viaduct has gained momentum as a major urban greenway conversion of an elevated rail viaduct. Currently, it is in the process of converting a small spur of the structure into a demonstration park in hopes of building more support for the ambitious and complicated project. Although it is a wider and more complex structure than the High Line, it has some of the most striking physical and contextual similarities with the High Line of any project investigated in this research. It also has remarkable parallels to the High Line in terms of its history and the shift in attention to a once-derelict structure that was long planned to be removed.

Additionally, the Reading Viaduct is a particularly good example of the shift in the value of post-industrial infrastructure. The three-mile-long Reading Viaduct was built in 1893 to smooth train travel through the industrial Callowhill area into the new Reading Terminal. It, along with the terminal, was of major importance to Philadelphia, both as infrastructure and as a symbol of modernization, wowing the crowds of onlookers that would assemble during its

construction (“Working Away on the Terminal. Rapidly Pushing the Construction of the Reading’s New Depot,” 1892). The last rail use of the viaduct was in 1992, though most use was discontinued in the 1980s, and the area it ran through experienced significant deindustrialization, with some conversion to artist lofts starting in the 1980s. The hollowed-out area surrounding the viaduct, an inspiration for David Lynch’s (2016) dark and gritty 1977 movie *Eraserhead*, provided insufficient property values to make its demolition cost effective, and only a small part of the structure connecting to Reading Terminal was removed in the 1960s, making way for a Vine Street Expressway on the edge of downtown.



FIGURE 30: PATH WORN ON TOP OF THE READING VIADUCT. PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTHOR 2014.

While architecture, planning, and design students from local universities have used the Reading Viaduct as a design project for over a decade, even proposing park-like uses in some

instances, their ideas gained little traction until the High Line's redevelopment got underway. In this case, the structure is not built on easements; instead, Reading International Corporation privately owns the structure and underlying land. Although Reading International has historical links to the Reading Railroad that used to run the tracks, it no longer engages in rail operations, instead primarily concentrating on real estate with a focus on cinemas in the U.S. West Coast, Australia, and New Zealand (Reading International, n.d.). Looking to shed the environmental and financial liability of the structure in the mid-1990s, the Reading Corporation engaged in talks with the City of Philadelphia to pay \$3.4 million to divest the property and avoid environmental liability. The city declined, worried about the liability it would assume, even with the cash payment. Just like the post-industrial High Line, the Reading Viaduct was a liability: a relic of a commodity that its owners were desperate to unload.

Post-High Line, however, a community advocacy group like Friends of the High Line, called Friends of the Rail Park (formerly the Reading Viaduct Project), organized to advocate for reuse as a park. Having gained philanthropic, real estate, and political support for the project, the City of Philadelphia has since been negotiating with Reading International about *purchasing* the structure, though they've been unable to agree on a price. While it is true that Philadelphia's central areas are in a small development boom, the newfound value of the structure is based not primarily on the appreciation of the underlying land – there would be large demolition and remediation costs to clear the land for redevelopment – but instead on the opportunity to use the once-worthless structure as a catalyst for urban redevelopment of the surrounding area. The Reading Viaduct, like other similar commodities post-High Line, is now imbued with value, as a catalyst and a symbol of “royal demand” (Appadurai, 1986, p. 13) for a specific high-end urban amenity and experience.



FIGURE 31: RENDERING OF PROPOSED CALLOWHILL TERMINUS WITH SWINGS. COURTESY OF STUDIO BRYAN HANES 2014.

While all the projects covered in this chapter have been bolstered and invigorated by the High Line phenomenon, there is no shortage of projects that have been inspired by it. One example is The Trestle, in St. Louis, Missouri. In this case, a regional public trails and greenways agency, called the Great Rivers Greenway (GRG), purchased a recently decommissioned elevated rail viaduct in a primarily industrial riverfront area for \$1.5 million to create its own elevated greenway in St. Louis (Gregorian, 2011). This is another example of the newfound value of post-industrial infrastructure, as, prior to the High Line, it would have been hard to imagine a public agency spending \$1.5 million dollars on a defunct rail viaduct in a low-value and poorly located neighborhood. But it is also a good example of a project that was completely inspired by the High Line. I have found no previous efforts to reimagine the structure, and interviews with former staff indicate that the High Line was the inspiration and

justification for the project.



FIGURE 32: THE TRESTLE. PHOTO BY AUTHOR 2012.



FIGURE 33: WESTERN END OF THE TRESTLE WITH GATE IN DISTANCE. PHOTO BY AUTHOR 2012.

As the family tree expands, the High Line's descendants mutate, reframing the value and potential of many types of obsolete infrastructure and even inspiring new construction. For example, in Cape Town, South Africa, designers have proposed converting an unfinished elevated freeway into a High Line-like park (Laylin, 2012). Completed in 1977, the freeway is not post-industrial; rather, it is postmodern infrastructure now viewed as obsolete, with no potential for its intended use. In an example of new construction, two residents of Scottsdale, Arizona are proposing a "A High Line Trail for Scottsdale" (Rose & Sydnor, n.d.). An idea its creators say "was actually created by a stroll through" the High Line, it would be a new elevated park in the middle of a large arterial road lined with low-density strip development (Rose & Sydnor, n.d.). The project, which might have sounded farfetched a decade ago, got a surprisingly positive endorsement from the Metro columnist of the state's largest newspaper, the *Arizona Republic*, who compared it to the High Line and other successful local projects that originally had detractors (Roberts, 2012, p. 10).

As the High Line phenomenon unfolds and more descendants emerge and reach fruition, there will be considerable opportunity to fully examine the contours of the process. It is already clear that the High Line phenomenon is entwined with well-established movements that underlie the descendants in one form or another: greenways, parks, rails-to-trails, industrial heritage and preservation, and more. The High Line's mobilization as an international phenomenon put the wind at these projects' backs, which helped any project associated with the High Line phenomenon to stand out when competing for revenue. It gave city boosters seeking international attention a new catwalk upon which to parade their achievements and a shot at outdoing the model. The fact that these projects are a public amenity, as well as something seen as making a healthier and more sustainable city, provided political capital, and their establishment as

economic development and real estate development tools brought that capital to the table. All of this has come together to produce a still-growing cadre of descendants. As the High Line phenomenon expands, it takes on a life of its own, in which projects become referential primarily to the phenomenon itself and not so much to the movements that underlie the early adopters. As such, they will likely form their own subset of parks and greenspace movements, from which ever more distant riffs on the High Line's key concepts will extend until the next big urban space fashion supplants them.

Chapter IX **Conclusion: Knowing and Learning from a Contemporary Mobilized
Urban Planning and Design Phenomenon**

They seem wild but they are so tame

They seem wild but they are so tame

They're moving towards you with their colors all the same

- "Rococo" (Arcade Fire, 2010)

The High Line has undoubtedly become a leading global idea and practice in urban planning, design, and development. In various ways, it acts as an inspiration, a precedent, a spectacular memory of historic infrastructure, a model, a policy, an aspirational imaginary and more – depending on who is transferring it to whom, who is sponsoring it, and the context in which it is being applied. Rather than try to see this phenomenon only through one particular lens, the point here has been to try to understand it broadly and through the whole arc of its making and mobilization. Of course, it is useful to view the phenomenon through particular lenses. Indeed, there is great value in framing it both in terms of movements (like greenways, industrial heritage, and preservation, etc.) and disciplinary frameworks (like urban infrastructure, urban redevelopment, etc.). But there is also value in taking a step back, in taking a wider view. In fact, the High Line may be such a powerful phenomenon partly because it works on so many levels. This entire study has shown how the High Line phenomenon can be embraced (and used) by almost everyone as an idea and practice furthering a particular interest. Adopting the High

Line phenomenon can act as – or signal – urban greening, sustainability, economic development, historic preservation, alternative transportation, and more. This makes it appealing to a wide variety of organizations and actors committed to each of these interests. It also makes it a potent symbolic tool. Politically, the ability to mix and match these signals makes for a potentially very powerful argument to direct public resources and attention to High Line-associated projects. Add to this its aspirational imaginary of the future of urbanism and its power to help a city secure a place on the world stage, and the mobilized High Line becomes a particularly potent phenomenon.

From Asset to Liability

Looking at the larger arc of the High Line phenomenon starts with the original High Line itself. The High Line, and its mobilization as a phenomenon, cannot be fully separated from its history. This is not simply because its past helps constitute parts of its origin stories and urban imaginary. It is because we can recognize the historical roots in its use as a symbol of progress and modernity and more fully understand the transformation of value for post-industrial, and increasingly other types, of obsolete infrastructure. The original High Line was born not just as a technical solution to a problem of the industrial city, but as a choice among alternatives and a symbol of progress or “prop” on the world stage that has become more and more about spectacle. While not among New York’s most important symbols – because it is more fabric than object – it was still part of what Rodgers called the “transatlantic crossings,” “a world mart of useful and intensely interesting experiments” (1998, p. 4). From its beginning, it was part of an early modern global trade in symbols and status. Recognizing this link to the past is essential for providing perspective on globalization. The High Line as a contemporary phenomenon is not

made of whole cloth. It is embedded in a long-standing, world-wide cycle of making and unmaking symbols of progress and success.

These symbolic shifts work concomitantly with its original and present use values, which are remarkably different. The original High Line lost its use, and its value, with changes in transportation, deindustrialization, and the purposeful decentralization of commercial activity. Along with its use, it lost its positive symbolic value, becoming instead a symbol of the obsolescence of the central city. In a place like Manhattan, that should have doomed the structure to the scrap heap. But because of the High Line's specific context of easements, economic cycles, politics, and the vagaries of real estate development in Manhattan, it developed an obduracy that preserved it far past its initial use and symbolic value. Many similar pieces of industrial infrastructure in cities did not survive to become similar artifacts. The High Line was left in a kind of limbo unusual for a high-value area like Manhattan, one that endured into a new era of ideas and approaches to dealing with the revitalization of urban environments where its value could be reinterpreted and reassessed. Like the many successful historic districts in cities around the world that have gone from 'obsolete slums' to gentrified high-value playgrounds, it suggests that in the long run, patience with urban artifacts that allows for their creative reuse may be more fruitful than creative destruction.

From Liability to Asset

A holdover in an environment ripe for inclusion in the Manhattan real estate game, the High Line became part of a drama about how an industrial area of the city was to be remade. It is an important example of the shaping force of perspective and dominant ideas in urban development and design. Conventional wisdom, and those forces with the most power, saw it as a liability and an impediment to the revitalization of the neighborhood – particularly for real

estate development potential. It acted as a barrier to more seamlessly connecting new development with the more desirable surrounding neighborhoods and, running midblock instead of in the middle of street, occupied many potentially valuable parcels that could be developed. While the High Line stubbornly held on in limbo, the new notions of preservation and reuse planted by various actors grew into an alternative perspective. The real estate interests, planners, policymakers, and others that sought to tear down the High Line were acting according to their own interests, but they were also acting according to a rational perspective of urban planning design and redevelopment. It was quite reasonable at the time to see the then-obsolete High Line as an impediment to the still-popular goals of postmodern urban reform, specifically removing barriers between neighborhoods and physically integrating public and private space all on the same plane. But the postmodern embrace of urban artifacts, when applied to the High Line, happened to conflict with that vision. As a result, the successful reuse of the High Line unsettled the dominant paradigm of postmodern urbanism in subtle but important ways. The High Line has become a harbinger and symbol of a new approach to urbanism, one paradoxically rooted in the past. Following its success, bridges, skywalks, underground parks, and other modernist urban interventions notably disjointed from the surrounding urban fabric are back on the table, despite being seen as anachronistic urban failures for at least the last twenty years.

Furthermore, real estate interests, planners, policymakers, and others who sought to tear down the High Line were not necessarily mistaken to believe that its removal would have met their goals; it was wholly reasonable at the time to argue that the removal of the High Line would lead to new development on property cleared of its easements and increase property values on the West Side, raising tax proceeds and sparking further redevelopment. The removal of the High Line would likely have been declared a financial success – just not as spectacular a success as

turning it into a high-design park proved to be. That the remaking of an obsolete piece of infrastructure like the High Line into a linear, elevated park would *turbo-charge* this process and lead to a high-end real estate bonanza was without specific precedent. We can draw an important lesson from this. Despite their adamancy that the High Line should be demolished, the real estate interests and those aligned with them spoke mostly from their interests and power, not from special knowledge about how urban revitalization works, as they insinuated. That the opponents' position was rooted in a rationality of the time gave it credence beyond that of their interests and power, but again, it was not based on superior or better knowledge. A clearer recognition of this dynamic, one applicable to debates over urban redevelopment not just in New York but nearly worldwide, could help improve the power imbalance in political discourse around urban revitalization and redevelopment in other settings.

The ability of the High Line's defenders to change the conversation despite powerful political and economic forces, as well as their ability to reframe ideas about the future of the urban form, is likewise critical to recognize. Building on the blossoming desire to mediate the creative destruction of Manhattan's urban fabric, the High Line's supporters developed a process of discovery and reimagining that made it possible for the public and other actors to envision the High Line as an asset instead of an impediment. It is analogous to the Buell Hypothesis: change the dream and you change the city (Martin, Meisterlin, & Kenoff, 2011). Many proponents of various descendants of the High Line, such as the 606 in Chicago and the Reading Viaduct in Philadelphia, have adopted this process for transformation rather closely. They use similar mixtures of fantastical design competitions, exhibitions, tantalizing visions of urban revitalization, fashion, celebrity, and urban greening, among other themes, to spark public imagination and build support.

The way the High Line changed the conversation illustrates Victor Hugo's axiom that "no army can stop an idea whose time has come." An idea for an alternative future for the High Line, planted and nurtured, eventually pushed out the ideas held by the (originally) more powerful naysayers. In much planning and social research, the power of ideas is given short shrift in relation to bedrock concerns of political economy. Typically focused on interests and power, analyses of the politics of urban planning and development seldom examine where ideas come from, how they take hold, and how they influence the process. A typical analysis of the politics of the High Line's reuse might have predicted that, stripped of its use and symbolic value, the artifact would have easily succumbed to the powerful interests of capital and existing political leadership, which were clear cut in the beginning. Yet that is not what happened. As the case of the High Line indicates, more attention must be given to what Rodgers examined during the transatlantic exchange period: the "agenda setting role of ideas" (1998, p. 6). While the site-specific legal and economic obstacles preserved the High Line from demolition, they alone did not save it. A new idea, building upon other ideas and movements that were taking hold, helped shape the politics. And, as the descendants of the High Line show, this process has been repeated, more or less, in sites around the world.

Though ideas are powerful and their essential role in structuring agendas and alternatives is often underappreciated, this research does not suggest that they operate outside the dynamics of political economy. Once the High Line had been imbued with new value through the reframing of its potential, different factions of real estate capital (and allied actors) recognized the new opportunity and realigned the power dynamics. The High Line entered into a new regime of value within a capitalist framework (Appadurai, 1986) that made it viable as a posh urban intervention in an era of widespread "austerity urbanism" (Peck, 2012). Not simply a

spectacular public-minded project, it had to appeal to elite donors, awash in Wall Street cash, who could give the project a boost – if it met their tastes and sociopolitical desires. It also had to conform to the dominant political economy of the time, and its design and execution, along with changes to the neighborhood like upzoning and gentrification, reflect that reality. But changing the conversation was key to changing the value and future of the High Line. The same has proven true for other sites around the world, such as the Reading Viaduct in Philadelphia. Two decades ago, its private owners could not pay the City to take on the liability. Today they are in negotiations about how much the city is willing to pay.

Making a Traveling Urban Imaginary

The High Line was a success in New York City: it gave the city's residents a new and curated version of an experience once reserved for the brave and knowledgeable few willing to enter an illicit and captivating public space. Savvy designers understood the High Line's moment. They incorporated the High Line's mythical industrial and wild pasts, resurrecting a connection to those two disappearing aspects of Manhattan. The project's very purposeful framing of New York as an urban landscape in a time of urban resurgence, its particular contemporary aesthetics, and its embedding of arts and culture in a linear form that creates a kind of guided *flânerie* (or "managed *flânerie*" as Short calls it (2012, p. 129)) for urban consumption connects to the zeitgeist of the time. It became a nearly perfect product to be produced at a particular historical moment with technological advances that easily spread images and narratives throughout the globe, as well as ballooning global tourism. It is a quintessential contemporary urban phenomenon representative of its particular time.

The High Line's success, and the ability to frame and spread knowledge of that success, have allowed it to become a symbol, a form of cultural capital for New York. This is very much

in parallel with the success of the arts and arts districts, in which the High Line is deeply embedded (literally and figuratively). As Rothenberg argues about arts and cultural capital in West Chelsea:

Cities like New York or Chicago can no longer claim added rent based on their centrality to ports, railroad lines or sources of information. Thus, new sources of monopoly rent must be discovered, and, as [David] Harvey asks, ‘what better way to make a claim to monopoly rent than on cultural artifacts and practices and special environmental conditions including cultural environment?’ (2012, p. 292).

This is true of the High Line, a unique cultural artifact in singular urban environment. Media and organizations such as the FHL built it up as a unique and spectacular attraction, an “‘only in New York’ moment” (La Farge, 2012, p. 99) with many urban reform benefits. This discursive process created this monopoly rent. The project had to be elevated to a spectacle to be highly valuable.

Following on this, advertising the High Line and its benefits on the world stage is imperative for capitalizing on this monopoly position. As a spectacular project in a world city at the center of global media, the High Line became a bona fide international sensation. I have covered this phenomenon in detail because it is not simply hype. The media and discourse around the High Line are a key part of producing and disseminating the High Line phenomenon. It is at once about framing the current global understanding of the High Line, its surrounding neighborhood, and Manhattan, and about spreading that understanding. This is done by turning the High Line into an urban imaginary that holds all the key elements that describe its value and success. Formal actors and networks still matter, but in a neoliberal political context where non-formal, non-government actors are valorized, non-formalized methods of mobilization and

transfer must be recognized as significant. Today, a community member who reads about the High Line and then proposes a local version in his or her city may carry more political weight than formal actors who develop the same idea. For many, adopting the High Line as a practice is not simply a solution to an urban problem but an embrace of the imaginary that the High Line holds, however it may mutate when it lands. Likewise, it is crucial to interrogate this mobilization to understand how and why it is so compelling across the globe.

Origins, Ancestors, and Descendants

The traveling imaginary is concocted through a process of spectacularization, discourse, and media, but it must eventually form a narrative that can be flattened (simplified) and easily mobilized. Origins – and more to the point, origin stories – form a base on which to build the narrative. The origin stories around the High Line must edit and compress its complicated history and are therefore by nature tools to promote particular aspects of it as a project and as an argument. These include areas of interest (such as historic preservation) and political projects (such as neoliberal urbanism and, relatedly, the Bloomberg Way). The High Line as a superlative urban intervention and practice is both rooted in material truths and is an argument for the advancement of historic preservation and/or greenways, etc. Likewise, the plucky, up-from-the-grassroots story of FHL’s founders is both anchored in truth and foregrounded to accentuate and promote aspects of neoliberal urbanism. The story de-emphasizes the role of government and public finance while promoting “entrepreneurial discourses” and public-private partnerships – very much in line with core features of neoliberal urbanism as identified by Theodore et al. (2011).

Interpreting the High Line’s reuse as intertwined with the neoliberal political project is unsettling for many who embrace it as a story of a local, grassroots success against dominant

forces. Locally led grassroots movements, such as tactical urbanism, have been touted as a counter to neoliberal urbanism (see Leitner, Peck, & Sheppard, 2007). But as some are beginning to argue, this is not inherently true of such efforts (e.g., Brenner, 2015; Karaman, 2017). While community-based efforts at revitalization are not necessarily coopted and may retain the “possibility that alternatives might be created and carried out,” they are often deeply engaged “in carrying out a neoliberal agenda” (Elwood, 2017, p. 128). And given the elite connections and robust financial backing that FHL quickly garnered, it was hardly the most oppositional of community movements. The neoliberal narrative embedded in the High Line’s origin stories is a reminder that politics infuses mobilized phenomena and cannot be ignored. It is also a reminder that narratives matter and are not superfluous to the production of the urban environment. The High Line’s mobilized narratives line up with the dominant political project contemporary to the High Line. As Wilson argues,

discourses of neoliberal optimism have also exercised our imaginations with talk of “creative cities,” city branding, urban regeneration and renewal, privatized and commercially enlivened “public” space, and many other pleasant stories of smarter economies, more sustainable growth, and participatory planning and development. (2011, p. 6)

The High Line phenomenon is a vehicle for promoting all of these ambitions and more. The narrative communicates the ability to achieve them while advocating for a particular way of achieving them meant to reinforce neoliberal urbanism. Some places that adopt the High Line as an idea or practice will not adopt the neoliberal framework for implementing it (or at least not all of it). But whether or not it plays out in that way on each site it lands is beside the point. The

central political ideas about the “best” method of action for revitalizing the urban environment still inserted themselves deeply into the conversation.

Key urban actors want and need to be seen as embracing these entrepreneurial and popularly accepted goals and, like New York, be recognized (and rewarded) for achieving them. The identification of “ancestors” is part of this process of association. Investigating the ancestors of the High Line reveals how many projects in cities around the world are re-narrated and reimagined to lay claim to association with the High Line. This is an attempt to produce monopoly rent on an existing site by giving it new and more widely understood cultural import. Likewise, it is meant to improve the status and visibility of the city that claims the project. Assertions that projects are ancestors are also an attempt to shape the origin story and family tree of the High Line phenomenon. Rather than being a genetically determined hierarchy, the High Line family tree is shaped through various discursive battles to claim a branch.

Investigating ancestors and origins also illuminates how the ideas underlying the High Line were part of larger movements circulating the globe. Situating the High Line in this process is important for grounding it. However, reducing it to the ultimate in a movement, such as urban greenways, does not do the phenomenon justice. It wrongly reduces a complex discursive and socio-political phenomenon to a more technical one. A close investigation of the Promenade Plantée helps reveal this. While the High Line was lauded as an innovation from the beginning, the Promenade Plantée, a fundamentally similar built project built over a decade earlier in a world city, was not. Certainly, the acceleration of global media and discourse via technology over the last decade plays into the lack of attention given the Promenade Plantée relative to the High Line. But cultural and political factors that shape world attention are primary in understanding why some things are on the map. More than the Promenade Plantée, the High Line

played towards tastes and desires of the moment necessary to develop broad-based public excitement, as well as funding from elite private backers, while acting as a tool to reinforce dominant contemporary urban political economy.

Just like ancestors, descendants are also meant to signal a city as progressive, innovative, and worthy of investment and attention from the world. The wide dissemination and overwhelming acceptance of the High Line as a good or ‘best’ practice have allowed the phenomenon to take hold in sites around the world. In this process, the motivating and inspiring part of the traveling urban imaginary is grounded in the High Line as part of the canon of “what works.” For many projects, the High Line appears to bolster existing ideas. These projects preexisted the High Line as ideas, inspired by the global movement of park, greenway and preservation concepts writ large. But, by creating a link to the High Line, promoters bolster these proposed (or completed) descendants by giving them a precedent. This is a fundamental part of planning and urban design practice and politics: essentially the notion that if it worked somewhere else, it could work here. But the Promenade Plantée could just as well have been the precedent in many of these cases, and it either was not, or was an insufficiently global sensation to provide the excitement necessary to push the project to the fore.

The High Line, however, provided a more exciting urban imaginary and more glamorous association. It also provided a precedent that showed how real estate investment could be thrown into overdrive. And it underscores the well-honed boosterism of New York. The precedent that really mattered was not the technical, community organizing or design innovation, but rather the entire, totalized High Line phenomenon and how it was perceived on the world stage. In the case of the Bloomingdale Trail in Chicago, an idea preexisting the High Line and not inspired by it, the success of the High Line was far more essential to the project than the precedent of the

Promenade Plantée, which was an inspiration for the project. This, along with the goal of catalyzing development and increasing real estate values, drew the Bloomingdale Trail into a High Line-like process of spectacularization. As one designer noted, it could not simply be like the High Line; it had to be different and better. Relatedly, it could not simply be a public amenity, but, like the High Line, it had to be a singular economic-development success.

Many descendants that were not proposed prior to the High Line appear to be inspired by it. In these cases, the High Line acted as a catalyst for actors in cities around the world, enabling them to see existing infrastructure through a new lens. This is a significant shift in perspective. Old infrastructure, seen in a new light, offers new possibilities and takes on new value in an era of spectacle. Different aspects of the phenomenon can be foregrounded, like sustainability or transportation, and one can rightly claim that many actors have some desire to provide a new public benefit. But, as the High Line itself is not in fact a unique precedent for those things. There is no denying that the very act of adopting the High Line as a practice is a choice laden with meaning about status and acceptance.

Both of these processes are important and speak to the interconnection of ideas and trends. Not just the pinnacle of a movement for urban greenways of amenities, the High Line represents a complex phenomenon that shapes other projects associated with it in a multitude of ways. Its fully global reach speaks to its importance as an example of a truly global contemporary phenomenon. It is significant that the High Line, led by its motivating aspirational urban imaginary, has become such an example, particularly outside the typical cast of “developed” nations. As Noel Salazar argues,

[i]ncreasingly, people in those countries are beginning to imagine the possible lives that might be available “out there” because they are often convinced that life is “better”

elsewhere. Being exposed to media, goods, and ideologies never before available, people are dreaming the signs and styles of a global order, while facing ever-narrower means by which to satisfy them. (2011, p. 578)

This hints at a trend toward convergence in global urbanism based on the knitting together of the world through internet media, with relevant parallels to Anderson's notion of "imagined communities." Across the world, both professionals (like planners and designers) and non-professionals are part of this ever more tightly unified order of global urbanism and its favored ideas and practices.

The Importance of Examining the High Line Phenomenon for Practice

Understanding how contemporary urban planning, design, and development phenomena come into being, are mobilized, and spread is useful not only for identifying the mechanisms of a contemporary urban process. As Patsy Healey has indicated, it is about unpacking what has been mobilized so it can be evaluated and criticized. This process involves not only criticisms but also demystification. For urban planners and designers, this is particularly important. The High Line, or really the High Line phenomenon, has become part of what Donald A. Schön called the "repertoire of examples, images, understandings and actions" (1983, p. 138). He argued that "[w]hen a practitioner makes sense of a situation he perceives to be unique, he sees it as something already present in his repertoire" (Schön, 1983, p. 138). The High Line has been added to this repertoire, and its global acceptance as a success implies that it is always a good choice or a 'best practice.' This stamp of approval is significant because actors are faced with an innumerable array of options for urban interventions that might boost urban image, attractiveness, amenities, and economic development. It is not simply a technical-rational exercise to choose among alternatives. Most situations, particularly those dealing with the reuse

or reformation of existing urban environments, as has been the focus here, are not fungible. And, as Schön argues, “the scope of technical expertise is limited by situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and conflict” (1983, p. 345).

Actors must make choices. Or, in line with Czarniawska’s arguments derived from theories of fashion in urban management, the widespread acceptance of the High Line as a successful urban intervention can be said to introduce “order and uniformity into what might seem an overwhelming variety of possibilities” (2005, p. 140). Certainly, planners and other practitioners of urban planning, design and redevelopment have deeply embedded the High Line into their repertoires. (In fact, one wonders if its widespread adoption will eventually transform it into an unfashionable stereotype.) Recognizing this is imperative because, as Schön noted, “as a practice becomes more repetitive and routine, and as knowing-in-practice becomes increasingly tacit and spontaneous, the practitioner may miss important opportunities to think about what he is doing” (1983, p. 61).

Today, these points increasingly extend beyond professional practitioners and others (like Steinway’s role in the production of the High Line) into a much wider array of non-professional urban actors (as the FHL founders purposefully labeled themselves). The surge in global travel and communications provides increasing access to knowledge about urban practices and ideas from around the world to anyone and everyone. This shift has an admirable democratizing quality about it. But it creates the complication of a larger field of actors who have developed various repertoires that shape their approach to urban interventions.

The High Line phenomenon is now a lens through which diverse actors involved in the production of the urban environment now view the potential of urban space. This mobilization and global spread of ideas and practices for intervention in the urban environment are not bad on

their face. There are good ideas and good practices. Learning from other places – both as inspiration and in execution – can be enriching and stimulating to all actors and their public discourse in the production of the urban environment. Precedents are useful in making arguments and expanding the scope of the possible in political discourse. But the pitfalls of this increasingly globalized dynamic need to be examined and countered. As a wildly popular phenomenon, the mobilized High Line has entered into the repertoire of a broad array of actors and creates the great risk of lack of reflection in the production of the urban environment. Along with carrying political projects and dominating attention, it has the potential, somewhat counterintuitively, to narrow the field of possible futures.

As a result, it is necessary to critically examine the High Line’s portrayal as a stroke of genius, a product of a plucky grassroots effort, and an idea developed in opposition to government, among other myths embodied in its origin stories. Questioning these myths is important not only to make practitioners better informed and more reflective, but also to improve political discourse on urban development and design. The production of the High Line may offer a specific lesson for the future of practice for planners and designers. Contrary to the tradition of the modernist diffusion of universal urban planning that focused on the spread and adoption of ideas and practices, planners and designers can push for more reflection and context sensitivity around the production of urban interventions. This would be a significant shift in approach even today, as exemplified by activities of the American Planning Association (APA), which tends to characterize planners as the aggregators and holders of best practices and templates. For example, in the APA’s website’s “Knowledge Center,” the focus on best practices is readily apparent (American Planning Association, n.d.). The Publications section invites member planners to “[l]earn best practices, review research, and discover powerful case studies from the

leading planning authorities and experts in the profession.” The Planning Advisory Service, a kind of in-house consulting program, also “provides assistance and publications on U.S. and regional planning best practices to subscribing planning agencies and firms.” The APA’s National Planning Award program even includes a Best Practice category that is judged in part on its implementation and transferability. While the desire to learn from cases and leading authorities is not inherently bad and is even necessary, this language also reveals the appeal to best practices as part and parcel of forming planners as topical authorities.

But the generation of the much-praised High Line by designers and planners emerged from a reflective process of finding the best solution, not an exercise in adopting or arguing for a tested best practice. The High Line might be rearticulated not as a ‘best practice’ in the sense of a model or template as seems to be case, but as an exceptional case that is still of value for its creativity and responsiveness to its specific context (despite its faults, such as gentrification and equity issues). Planners and designers might learn from this the need to rearticulate a role that puts them in the center of a discourse and process of solution-finding without such heavy reliance on prefigured ideas and practices. Ideally, they would serve not simply as the conveyors or implementers of such ideas and practices, but as leaders who reflect deeply on potential solutions and help a wider array of actors unpack them.

The High Line is a useful and complicated contemporary case of urban planning, design, and redevelopment. It must be understood both as a real place – a response to specific circumstances and needs in a particular context and time – and as a mobilized phenomenon carried forward by narratives and imaginaries that are related yet something separate unto themselves. At base, illuminating and unpacking this distinction should provide practitioners and

others interested in the production of the contemporary urban environment an opportunity to understand and reflect on this topic. It speaks not only to the specifics of High Line-like ideas and interventions, but also to broad issues regarding the production and dissemination of urban aspirations and knowledge in late capitalism. Determinations of value and success are increasingly produced in a globalized socio-spatial dynamic. It will take truly reflective practitioners – and non-professionals – who recognize the influence of mobilized ideas, models and practices to craft the next generation of responsive and creative solutions to urban problems.

APPENDIX

The High Line 'Family Tree' Data

^a Score of 1= compare, 2= inspired or bolster

^b Score of 1 = yes, 2= mixed, 3 = no

City & Country	Name	Description	Association Type ^a	Linear ^b	Elevated ^b	Rail ^b	Reuse ^b	Industrial Heritage & Preservation ^b	Urban Context ^b	Score	Wave	Status	Notes
Sydney, Australia	Goods Line	Former rail right of way, partially elevated, short, addition to existing network.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	completed in 2015	Lead by public authority, two stages, north and south. The <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> called it the "Sydney version of New York High Line."
Aarhus, Denmark	Coal Line	150-meter bridge formerly used to load coal onto ships will be turned into an elevated park.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	"Danish version of High Line Park" "taking inspiration from the city that never sleeps" "why should New York get all the cool stuff"
Berlin, Germany	Siemensbahn	Abandoned elevated passenger railroad proposed for conversion to elevated park.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	A travel blog called it "the High Line of Berlin."

City & Country	Name	Description	Association Type^a	Linear^b	Elevated^b	Rail^b	Reuse^b	Industrial Heritage & Preservation^b	Urban Context^b	Score	Wave	Status	Notes
Tokyo, Japan	Log Road Daikanyama	A 220-meter long walking path/ high end shopping mall built on a former Tokyo Toyoko elevated rail line.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	completed 2015	Multiple travel blogs and other online mentions compare it to the High Line. One calls it "Tokyo's answer to New York's high line" (sic).
Rotterdam, The Netherlands	Hofbogen	An old rail viaduct running through town that was put out of service in 2009.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	Has core first wave similarities, though has struggled to gain traction beyond the idea stage and test area.

City & Country	Name	Description	Association Type^a	Linear^b	Elevated^b	Rail^b	Reuse^b	Industrial Heritage & Preservation^b	Urban Context^b	Score	Wave	Status	Notes
Birmingham, United Kingdom	Duddeston Viaduct	Abandoned elevated masonry railroad viaduct to be converted into park/greenway.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	High Line explicitly used as a model and uses very similar language, like "skypark."
Edinburgh, United Kingdom	Leith Walk Regeneration	Reuse and abandoned elevated railway crossing Leith walk to connect east and west city bike paths.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	Described as "taking a tip from the High Line."
Glasgow, United Kingdom	Glasgow High Line	Disused railway to be converted into a city center park.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	High Line specifically called out as their inspiration.

City & Country	Name	Description	Association Type ^a	Linear ^b	Elevated ^b	Rail ^b	Reuse ^b	Industrial Heritage & Preservation ^b	Urban Context ^b	Score	Wave	Status	Notes
Leeds, United Kingdom	Holbeck High Line	A 1.7 abandoned rail viaduct to be converted to greenway /park.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	Named the Holbeck High Line and local media makes direct comparisons.
London, United Kingdom	Limehouse Curve	Abandoned stone railway viaduct in Tower Hamlets to be converted into a linear park.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	Considered one of the most promising High Line's for London by <i>Londonist</i> blog. Seems to be overshadowed by bigger, more fashionable projects — but very similar to High Line.
London, United Kingdom	Millwall Viaduct	An unused viaduct spur to be converted to an elevated park.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	Included in London's <i>Urban/Rural</i> blog's list of possible "High Lines" in London.

City & Country	Name	Description	Association Type ^a	Linear ^b	Elevated ^b	Rail ^b	Reuse ^b	Industrial Heritage & Preservation ^b	Urban Context ^b	Score	Wave	Status	Notes
London, United Kingdom	Peckham Coal Line	Disused elevated rail viaduct to be converted to linear park.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	An article in <i>Time Out London</i> asks if it could be "London's answer to NYC's High Line."
London, United Kingdom	Railbridge Over Waterloo Road	A former rail bridge to be converted to a park.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	The <i>Londonist</i> blog included it an article about potential High Lines in London
London, United Kingdom	The Camden Line	Disused elevated rail viaduct to be converted to a park.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	Included in London's <i>Urban/Rural</i> blog's list of possible "High Lines" in London.
Manchester, United Kingdom	Manchester Maze	Convert Castlefield Viaduct into park.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	Article in <i>Horticulture Week</i> titled: "Landscape architects lobby for Manchester High-Line-style park."
Sheffield, United Kingdom	Sheffield High Line	Convert an abandoned elevated rail viaduct to a linear park.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	Called Sheffield High Line and backers describe it as "inspired by New York's High Line."

City & Country	Name	Description	Association Type ^a	Linear ^b	Elevated ^b	Rail ^b	Reuse ^b	Industrial Heritage & Preservation ^b	Urban Context ^b	Score	Wave	Status	Notes
Chicago, United States of America	Bloomington Trail/the 606	2.7-mile elevated freight railway turned into greenway.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	related	Idea came before High Line (inspired largely by Promenade Plantée and other sources) but did not gain traction until buzz about the High Line. Often compared and physically similar it is much simpler in design and operates as a more typical greenway. As well, tightly networked into other parks and less stand alone. In a similar it is embroiled in issues about catalyzing gentrification in surrounding areas.

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Jersey City, United States of America	The Embankment	Effort to convert the old Harisumus embankment into a greenway.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	Directly inspired by the High Line and supported by Friends of High Line.
New York, United States of America	Long Island City	Convert unused elevated tracks in part of Long Island City into a partially elevated park.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	<i>Curbed</i> calls it another "High Line style park."
Philadelphia, United States of America	Manayunk Bridge	Abandoned rail bridge over river that has been converted into a greenway.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	completed in 2015	<i>Philadelphia Magazine</i> calls it "Highline-esque."

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Philadelphia, United States of America	Reading Viaduct	An abandoned elevated railway to be converted to linear park. Also connected to a below-grade portion that has been proposed for conversion to an underground linear park.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	Described as a "High Line Park for Philadelphia" and as "[i]nspired by a presentation from a co-founder of the New York High Line."

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Poughkeepsie, United States of America	Walkway Over Hudson	An abandoned rail bridge converted into a walkway.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	completed in 2009	Completed very shortly after the High Line and seems unlikely it was inspired by it, but does appear that the High Line's success set a frame for interpreting the project. <i>Audubon</i> that the High Line would be "upstaged in truly spectacular fashion by the Walkway Over the Hudson."
Richmond, VA, United States of America	Bridge Park	Build a pedestrian bridge park on the still remaining piers of an old confederate bridge over the St. James River.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	One local news outlet writes that "Bridge Park more resembles High Line in New York" and asks: "Is it Richmond's time to High Line?" Another that the project was inspired by the High Line.

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Saint Louis, United States of America	The Trestle	An abandoned elevated viaduct to be converted into a greenway.	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	proposed	Physically similar but lead by a public authority. Directly compared to the High Line.
Shelbourne, MA, United States of America	Bridge of Flowers	A 1908 trolley bridge converted into linear park.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	completed	Per www.livingthehighline.com (the companion website to the book <i>On the High Line</i>) it is the "original High Line."

Toronto, Canada	Belt Line Trail	A 9km greenway on an old rail right of way.	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	7	1	completed (started in 19080s)	Physically very similar to Chicago's Bloomingdale Trail. An article in <i>Torontoist</i> compared it to the High Line phenomenon: "In June, Chicago's Bloomingdale Trail joined New York's High Line as the latest set of train tracks to be transformed into a public park. But, before you turn green with envy at this innovative investment in open space, let's remember that Toronto has its very own converted railway corridor. The Beltline Trail may get less love than its American counterparts but . . ."
Toronto, Canada	West Toronto Railpath	Proposed conversion of an at-grade right of way into a greenway.	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	7	1	completed phase one in 2009, second phase in progress	A rather straightforward greenway project but linked to High Line by <i>untappedcities.com</i> . It has a "friends of" and, while little of it

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													elevated, their website prominently features a small elevated iron viaduct reminiscent of the High Line.
Paris, France	Promenade Plantée	In 12th arrondissement, stone viaduct (Viaduc des Arts) that is part of a larger greenway along obsolete rail right of way (Coulee Verte). Known as Promenade Plantée in English.	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	7	1	completed in 1994	Often claimed to be the "original High Line."

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Berlin, Germany	Görlitzer Highline	1 km elevated railroad from the former Görlitzer Station (now a park) that is a working walking path.	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	7	1	completed in early 1990s	Simple, little upgrades but overlooked precedent in its key similarities
Wuppertal, Germany	Projekt Nordbahnstrasse / Lego Bridge	An old embankment through city to be converted to a greenway.	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	7	1	proposed	<i>Arch Daily</i> calls it High Line Inspired how it is a tool for a post-industrial city to spark creative class/tech economy. Known as the "giant Lego bridge."

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Chicago, United States of America	Weber Spur	An abandoned elevated railway on Chicago's Northwest side that has been proposed as a new greenway.	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	7	1	proposed	Idea for it as a typical rails-to-trails by bike advocates preceded the High Line. Attention for the project has been sparked by the 606 — making it a kind of second cousin of the High Line.
Cleveland, United States of America	Red Line Greenway	Three-mile greenway on abandoned/underutilized rail right of way with elevated part crossing river bridge.	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	7	1	proposed	A more typical rails-to-trails greenway, has been described as "Cleveland's answer to New York's popular High Line park." Facebook page links to High Line.

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Miami, FL, United States of America	Old Seven Mile Bridge	Proposal to turn old rail bridge connecting two keys into a linear park.	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	7	1	proposed	Per <i>Curbed</i> : "A group of preservationists and bridge lovers are coming to Old Seven's rescue, with dreams of turning it into something akin to New York's High Line."
New York, United States of America	The Queensway	An abandoned elevated, below-grade and at-grade rail line in Queens to be converted to a greenway.	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	7	1	proposed	Frequently called a "Queens High Line" it may not have been inspired by the High Line. However, the success of the High Line has brought the idea new attention and energy.

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Sydney, Australia	High Lane	Proposal to turn Sydney's old Monorail into a "High Line"	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	8	2	proposed	Idea described as "reminiscent of New York's High Line" and sparked a debate about "Does It Make Sense to Turn Sydney's Monorail into a High Line?"

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Edmonton, Canada	Freezeway	A 6.8 mile at-grade "skating lane", part of which is an abandoned rail line, through the city.	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	proposed	Other, similar skating lanes exist elsewhere, but as one media outlet put it: "New York's High Line provides a high-profile precedent for upgrading unused rail infrastructure." And: "It also has potential international appeal as a tourist attraction and urban icon akin to the High Line in New York, Garden Bridge coming to London, Sea Wall in Vancouver and other one-of-a-kind landscape projects around the world."

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Toronto, Canada	Scarborough RT	Convert the elevated Scarborough Rapid Transit Line (which is to be replaced by a subway) into an elevated park.	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	8	2	proposed	<i>A Toronto Life</i> article asks: "Could the Scarborough RT really become a High Line-style elevated park?"
Vancouver, Canada	Arbutus	A 9-kilometer abandoned at-grade rail right-of-way to be turned into a greenway.	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	proposed	The Mayor to the <i>Globe and Mail</i> : "This is Vancouver's chance to have a New York-style High Line."

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Santiago, Chile	Tunel de FFCC	Old rail tunnel and below-grade right-of-way to be converted to path.	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	proposed	<i>Arch Daily, The Huffington Post</i> and <i>Architizer</i> articles includes it lists of High Line inspired projects.
Helsinki	Baana	Below-grade rail corridor turned into bike path	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	completed 2012	While a relatively simple below-grade greenway has been compared to High Line in various media outlets.

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Paris, France	La Petite Ceinture	"Little Belt Way", 17-mile below-grade abandoned rail line circling Paris. Some re-purposed for RER, most abandoned. Some already turned into green space	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	planning, unclear	<i>Untapped Cities</i> links it to High Line, but really very different.
Jerusalem, Israel	Railway Park	Old rail right of way turned into bike path.	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	completed first phase between 2010-2013	<i>Arch Daily</i> claims it "High Line like." The media outlet <i>Haaretz</i> calls it the "local version of New York's High Line."

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Fukuoka, Japan	Maidashi Ryokuchi	Former railroad line repurposed as a park with playground, trail and fountains.	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	existing since 1983	A variety of sites, including the Wikipedia entry, consider it a precursor to the High Line.
London, United Kingdom	Bishopsgate Goods Yard	Old railyard and viaduct to be redeveloped with park space	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	8	2	proposed	Included in <i>Londonist</i> and other source's lists of potential "High Lines" in London
London, United Kingdom	Borough Market Bridge	Reuse of part of elevated tracks new market for pedestrian link/park	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	8	2	proposed	Included in London's <i>Urban/Rural</i> blog's list of possible "High Lines" in London.
London, United Kingdom	Parkland Walk	Greenway on old rail right of way.	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	8	2	completed 1984	Included in London's <i>Urban/Rural</i> blog's list of possible "High Lines" in London.

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London, United Kingdom	Pop Down	Proposal to turn old Royal Mail tunnels into underground linear park.	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	proposed	One of the winners of a High Line for London competition that received international attention.
London, United Kingdom	The Greenway	Park promenade that runs along the top of a large Victorian outflow sewer.	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	8	2	completed 2004	Included in London's <i>Urban/Rural</i> blog's list of possible "High Lines" in London.
London, United Kingdom	Underline/Aldwych tunnel	A no longer used tram tunnel between Southampton and Aldwych to be converted into an underground linear park.	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	proposed	Part of <i>Londonist's</i> review of possible "High Lines" that would work in London.

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Atlanta, United States of America	Beltline	An old mostly at-grade or bermed rail right-of-way encircling the city being turned into green way and light rail line.	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	completed initial phase in 2014 with considerable expansion in process	Reported to be derived from a graduate planning thesis in 1999, it has become associated with the High Line in various popular media.
Birmingham, AL, United States of America	High Ore Line	A two-mile walking and biking trail in Jefferson County (Birmingham MSA), part of the Red Rock Bridge and Valley Trail System	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	8	2	completed 2016	From the <i>Alabama Newscenter</i> (online news source of Alabama Power) writes: "New York City has its famed "high line" elevated walking trail. Now Jefferson County has a place where people also can safely walk, run or ride bicycles above and away from the dangers of street traffic."

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Charleston, SC, United States of America	Lowcountry Lowline	Conversion of an at-grade unused rail line into 1.7-mile greenway.	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	proposed	Per the <i>Charleston Citypaper</i> : "Those leading the development envision the proposed park as Charleston's own version of New York City's High Line."
Chicago, United States of America	Wabash Lights	A public art project to add a LED light tubes under the elevated tracks over Wabash Ave to enliven the space.	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	proposed	While not seemingly different in key respects, <i>Gizmodo</i> described it as part of the next wave of High Line inspired projects that "aren't waiting for the transportation around them to stop running."

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Dallas, United States of America	Katy Trail	A 3.5 rails-to-trails greenway dating back to 2000.	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	completed in early 2000s	While a typical greenway, some comparisons have been made, including a High Line visitor who called it "like Katy Trail in Dallas" and a local real estate writer calling the Katy trail "not unlike what has been done with the High Line on Manhattan's West Side."

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Detroit, United States of America	Dequindre Cut	Below-grade bike path on abandoned rail right of way starting at Detroit river. First phase to Eastern Market, second phase expanded west and to be linked to larger bike network.	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	First phase completed 2009, second phase in 2016	Started as a rails-to-trails, but leaders saw it as a kindred project with the High Line. Backward glow — discourse now about expansion linked it High Line but can't find a clear link in the beginning
Los Angeles, United States of America	Rail-to-River	Proposal to convert an old rail right of way to bike path through South LA.	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	proposed	The County Supervisor promoting the project appeals to the High Line and <i>Curbed</i> says it "could be taking the concept of the High Line to a whole new level: ground level."

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Miami, FL, United States of America	Ludlam Trail	A 6.2-mile former railroad right of way to be converted to a greenway.	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	proposed	Compared to the High Line in local media. In the About section of the Ludlam Trail's Facebook page it says "[I]like the High Lin in NYC, the return on investment promises to be exponential."

Miami, FL, United States of America	Quadrille Linear Park	A half-mile section of at- grade abandoned railroad tracks in downtown West Palm Beach to be converted to a linear park.	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	proposed	<p>According to an article in the <i>Broward Palm Beach New Times</i> the founder of the project: "imagined a linear park — like New York City's High Line — with families going on walks, people exercising, and dogs playing on leashes. Wormus started speaking with other people, and they seemed just as frustrated that the sprawling half-mile track of prime downtown real estate was going to waste." As well, the project won a grant from the Knight Foundation, which described it as "West Palm Beach's Version of New York City's High Line."</p>
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Minneapolis/St. Paul, United States of America	Midtown Greenway	A 5.7-mile greenway along a former railroad corridor.	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	Completed phase one in 2000, phase two in 2004 and phase three in 2006	A local real estate blog directly compared it to the High Line and local news has grouped it with the High Line. A local engineering, planning and design consulting firm that has worked on the Midtown Greenway described it on their website as "[s]imilar to New York's acclaimed High Line."
New Orleans, United States of America	Lafitte Greenway	A 2.6 mile at-grade rails-to-trails greenway on an abandoned rail right of way.	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	completed in 2015	Friends of the High Line considers it a similar project, as do other planners and even the planning document for the project uses the High Line as a precedent.

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New York	Bronx Lowline	Below-grade abandoned tracks to be converted to park.	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	proposed	Bronx Borough President wrote letter to Mayor De Blasio looking for support to turn it into a park "comparable to the High Line."
New York, United States of America	Bronx Recreational Rail Car Riding	Proposal to reuse a rail line on the Bronx waterfront for short open-air recreational train rides.	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	8	2	proposed	<i>The New York Times</i> writes " like the transformation of the old Manhattan freight line into the High Line park, could potentially draw tourists and dollars to an economically struggling neighborhood."

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Pittsburgh, United States of America	High Line	Part of a plan to develop the South Side Terminal, convert a partially elevated asphalt road that turns through the complex to the Monongahela River into a public green space.	2	1	1	3	1	1	1	8	2	proposed	Per the <i>Pittsburgh Post-Gazette</i> , the developer plans "to turn an asphalt street that runs through the complex to the Monongahela River into a public green space it has dubbed the 'High Line.'"

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Sydney, Australia	Lavender Bay Rail Siding	Convert a rail right of way along the Sydney waterfront into a park or pedestrian way.	2	1	3	1	1	2	1	9	2	proposed	<i>The Daily Telegraph</i> described as a call "for New York High Line along Sydney Harbour."
Kerry (County), Ireland	Kerry Cycle Route / Kerry Greenway	Addition to existing cycle route and abandoned 16km railroad with elevated viaduct portion converted to rails-to-trails.	2	1	2	1	1	1	3	9	2	proposed	Called "Ireland's answer to New York's High Line." Connected to existing network, but as this will have significant elevated portions of disused rail viaducts -that is seen more as the comparative part.

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Singapore	Green Corridor	Proposal to transform disused at-grade railway through forest leading to Malaysia into greenway.	2	1	3	1	1	1	2	9	2	proposed	Said to take its inspiration from the High Line and often compared.
Bangkok, Thailand	The Skyride / Lowline	Proposal for a bicycle lane cantilevered from the city's skytrain system.	2	1	1	1	2	3	1	9	2	proposed	<i>Evo</i> article called it "Bangkok's version of the New York's Highline."

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London, United Kingdom	Kings Cross Arches	Refurbishment of a historic building complex with the addition of a viaduct as a linear green space.	2	1	2	3	1	1	1	9	2	proposed	Per the <i>Architects Journal</i> , the viaduct is "inspired by New York's High Line."

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Birmingham, AL, United States of America	Railroad Park	An abandoned rail yard converted to a park. Segment of a planned greenway system.	2	2	3	1	1	1	1	9	2	completed 2010	Typologically fits more generally with industrial heritage and preservation as well as high-design destination parks. The idea is said to have come about in 1970s, though a "Friends of" organization was founded in 2001, a similar time to other projects that were buoyed by the buzz of the High Line. Also, now viewed through a lens of successfully catalyzing redevelopment. Key commonalities and more study needed.

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Milwaukee, United States of America	Art Island	Proposal to convert an abandoned railroad bridge into a linear park.	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	9	2	proposed	The website <i>Architizer</i> asks: "Will Milwaukee get the next High Line."
Summit, New Jersey, United States of America	Summit High Line	Proposal to convert an abandoned at-grade rail line into a High Line.	2	1	3	1	1	1	2	9	2	proposed	Local news reports that "it could become — Summit's own Highline."
Freemantle, Australia	Freo	Convert the Queen Victoria Street bridge into a pedestrian space.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	News media: "That proposal is modelled on New York's High Line, a former freight rail line turned into a popular public park suspended over Manhattan's streets."

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Melbourne, Australia	Chandler Highway Bridge	Convert old roadway bridge in Victoria area into an "urban oasis."	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	Per article in <i>Architecture AU</i> : "A government media release calls for ideas for an "urban oasis", saying proposals received so far include "community gardens, parks, playgrounds and open spaces inspired by New York's famous High Line." The High Line is a 2.3-kilometre linear park built in Manhattan on an elevated section of a disused New York Central Railroad."

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Melbourne, Australia	Yarra Walk	Proposal to convert an old pedestrian bridge into linear style park	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	Melbourne's Lord Mayor in the <i>Herald Sun</i> : "“I think we’ve got a chance ... of creating something like Melbourne’s High Line,” Lord Mayor Robert Doyle said, referring to the New York park that has been built on a 2.3km-long disused elevated rail line."

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Sydney, Australia	Anzac Bridge Park	Convert the Anzac Bridge over Johnstons Bay into a park.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	As a part of a design competition for redevelopment AECOM submitted a proposal that included converting the bridge (notably not particularly old or obsolete) into a park. A local paper reported that the team "drew on lessons from New York's 'High Line.'"
Sao Paulo, Brazil	Big Worm	Elevated highway being considered for conversion to park	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	<i>Next City</i> writes: "Brazil may be getting its own High Line."

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Montreal, Canada	Bonaventure	Proposal to retain part of an obsolete elevated freeway as an elevated park.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	The <i>Journal Metro</i> compares it to a High Line.
Vancouver, Canada	Reconciliation Bridge	Convert the old Georgia Bridge into a park.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	The community member who is advocating it, Joseph Roberts, is publisher of the magazine <i>Common Ground</i> and directly describes his visit to the High Line in New York as inspiration for the idea.

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Vancouver, Canada	Westminster Parkade	Proposal to refurbish an existing linear waterfront "parkade" (a kind of parking garage) and turn the rooftop into a park.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	Three people leading the charge showed the reporter "photos of New York's High Line, a park that extends along an abandoned railway line."
Winnipeg, Canada	Arlington Bridge Park	Proposal to convert old road bridge spanning rail yard into a linear park	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	Per the <i>Metro News</i> : "One Popular talking point is to say the Arlington Bridge could become Winnipeg's version of the High Line."

City & Country	Name	Description	Association Type^a	Linear^b	Elevated^b	Rail^b	Reuse^b	Industrial Heritage & Preservation^b	Urban Context^b	Score	Wave	Status	Notes
Berlin, Germany	Templehof Airport Roof	Proposal to us spectator area of long roof along airport as a path/park space.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	Described by blogger as "a Berlin High Line."
Luca, Italy	Luca Walls	Intact 2 miles of renaissance walls surrounding Luca that was converted to a park that far predates the High Line.	1	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	completed — unclear when public could walk on walls, but is before opening of the High Line	Travel sites have begun to compare the walls to the High Line as a way of explaining them, like this one: "The top of the walls has been re-purposed into an elevated park (think New York's High Line) where locals and visitors jog, bike and stroll." A Trip Advisor posting calls it "the High Line of Luca."

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Rome, Italy	GI24	Unfinished elevated track to be converted to park (as well as space below).	2	2	2	1	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	Designers/backers directly claim it was inspired by the High Line.
Seoul, South Korea	Seoul Station (renamed Seoul Skygarden)	Conversion of a .6-mile elevated motorway near the central rail station into elevated pedestrian park.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	completed 2017	Frequently compared to High Line in news media and backers make directly appeal to it as a precedent.

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Moscow, Russia	Hammer and Sickle Factory	Major redevelopment of old factory that will include a "high line" like elevated park using parts of the original factory transport ring.	2	1	1	3	2	2	1	10	2	proposed	Per <i>Gizmodo</i> : "Moscow Is Turning a Historic Soviet Factory Into Its Very Own High Line."
Cape Town, South Africa	freeway conversion (no name)	Proposal to convert unused highway spur into linear elevated park.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	An <i>Inhabitat</i> article directly compares it to the High Line.

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Barcelona, Spain	Pedestrian bridge	Pedestrian bridge over freeway redesign	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	Per <i>Fast Company</i> : "This Redesigned Pedestrian Overpass in Barcelona is like a mini High Line."

City & Country	Name	Description	Association Type ^a	Linear ^b	Elevated ^b	Rail ^b	Reuse ^b	Industrial Heritage & Preservation ^b	Urban Context ^b	Score	Wave	Status	Notes
High Wycombe, United Kingdom	Flyover	Part of a wider regeneration proposal for the city center that includes plans to convert an elevated road running through the town center to an elevated pedestrian park.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	From the <i>Bucks Free Press</i> : "The flyover in High Wycombe could become a pedestrianized urban park as part of extensive changes that a community group hopes will transform the town. The mooted road overhaul — similar to New York's converted train track the High Line and the grand vision of London's Garden Bridge — is suggested as a part of a town-wide consultation on what people want to see the town look like in the future."

City & Country	Name	Description	Association Type^a	Linear^b	Elevated^b	Rail^b	Reuse^b	Industrial Heritage & Preservation^b	Urban Context^b	Score	Wave	Status	Notes
Liverpool, United Kingdom	The Flyover	Proposal to convert an old pedestrian flyover into walkway/park	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	It has been compared in various media to the High Line and timing indicates it fits as being buoyed by trend. A commenter on their fundraiser page wrote: "Check out the High Line in New York for an example of how this works really well."
London, United Kingdom	Camden High Line	Proposal to turn the top of shops on Camden High Street into a green corridor.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	Local media wrote that "[t]his project was inspired by the High Line in New York."

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London, United Kingdom	Hammersmith Flyover	Proposal to convert obsolete elevated road being replaced by tunnel into elevated park.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	<i>Londonist</i> article say it could be "London's equivalent of New York's High Line."
London, United Kingdom	Lewisham High Line	Proposal to convert a corridor space over a market roof into a small pedestrian walkway.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	Per a local blog: "The plan is to turn this into Lewisham's own miniature 'High Line'..!"
Buffalo, United States of America	Skyway	Proposal to convert all or half of an old elevated waterfront freeway into an elevated linear park.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	Idea appears to be pre-2008, but hints that it was inspired by High Line. Idea credited to Tim Tielman of Campaign for Greater Buffalo.

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Hartford, CT, United States of America	I-84 Viaduct	Proposal to convert an obsolete elevated freeway viaduct into an elevated park.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	Per the <i>Hartford Courant</i> , the idea was suggested at a public forum on the future of the highway viaduct included an "elevated and pedestrian walkway in the style of New York City's High Line."

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Houston, United States of America	Pierce Skypark	Proposal to convert elevated freeway into park.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	From the <i>Houston Chronicle</i> : "And that, say Cryer and other urban dreamers, could be a huge opportunity for Houston. What if, instead of tearing down the Pierce Elevated at an enormous cost, the freeway structure became the base for an elevated linear park — a Houston version of New York's High Line or Paris's Promenade Plantée?"

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Los Angeles, United States of America	2 Freeway	Proposal to convert an elevated spur of the 2 Freeway into a park and mixed-use development	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	The idea was proposed in a column in the Los Angeles Times and acknowledges the influence and comparisons of the High Line.
Los Angeles, United States of America	6th Street Bridge Reuse	Proposal to convert and old vehicle bridge into linear pedestrian park.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	bridge has been torn down	Local developer promoted "the idea of modeling the bridge after Manhattan's High Line Project."
Los Angeles	Figuroa-Riverside Bridge	Proposal to use an old bridge over LA River east of downtown being replaced. keep as park	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	bridge has been torn down	The idea was directly compared to a "High Line park" in media and blogs.

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New Haven, United States of America	Farmington Canal Greenway	Conversion of the space alongside old canal into a greenway.	2	1	2	3	1	1	2	10	2	completed an initial section in 1994, with additional sections in 2009 and more to be completed .	The comparison to the High Line centers on a proposed central city section that supporters claim will make it like the High Line. <i>Arch Daily</i> claims it "High Line like."
New Orleans, United States of America	Crescent Park	A 1.4-mile high-design riverfront park on former industrial riverfront.	2	1	3	3	1	1	1	10	2	completed first phase in 2014	Per <i>CNN Travel</i> : "Picture New York's High Line with a riverfront."

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New York, United States of America	High Bridge	Reopen an 1848 viaduct that used to be open to pedestrians but was closed for the last 40 years.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	reopened as pedestrian bridge in 2015	Originally constructed in 1848 it was closed to pedestrian for the last 40 years. Called "the original High Line" and described as uptown getting "its own High Line," it is a clear case where a past place or object is reinterpreted through the imaginary of the High Line, which it has very limited in common with. Reopening has been talked about prior to the High Line.

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Philadelphia, United States of America	Race Street Pier	A river pier converted to an urban park and designed by James Corner.	2	1	3	3	1	1	1	10	2	completed in 2011	The design by Corner echoes that of the High Line. A local architecture critic makes direct comparison.
San Francisco, United States of America	High Link	Competition winning proposal for converting obsolete Interstate 280 overpass to High Line like park.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	Per an article in <i>Architizer</i> the plan is "along the lines of New York's High Line."

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Washington, D.C., United States of America	Bridge Park	Proposal turn the obsolete 14th street bridge connecting Anacostia with central DC into a linear park.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	in design	Frequently compared to High Line in news media. Appears to be highly influenced by interurban competition with New York. The <i>Washington Business Journal</i> called it "D.C's answer to the High Line."
Berlin, Germany	Natur-Park Schoneberger Sugelande	Abandoned at-grade railway yard converted to park with remnants of rail infrastructure kept.	1	3	3	1	1	1	1	10	3	completed in 1999	Blogs make a direct comparison. A rail theme, but really little relationship (more a rail yard than focus on linear path)

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New York, United States of America	The Lowline (Formerly Delancey underground)	Proposal to convert abandoned underground trolley station into underground park.	2	3	3	1	1	1	1	10	3	proposed	A clear appeal to the High Line and following similar tactics as FHL, it has often been compared to the High Line.
Seattle, United States of America	Park My Viaduct/Initiate 123	Proposal to save the Alaskan Way Viaduct and convert it into a mile-long elevated park.	2	1	1	3	1	3	1	10	2	proposed	Per a presentation by supporters: "When Seattle started planning the remodel for the Central Waterfront the High Line didn't exist, but now we know that the world has fallen in love with elevated parks."

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London, United Kingdom	The Promenade of Curiosities	Plan for a linear park in Vauxhall to connect the area and spark redevelopment.	2	1	3	2	2	2	1	11	2	proposed	Winner of a competition "partly inspired by the New York High Line."
Indianapolis, United States of America	Monon Trail	Proposal to convert an existing rails-to-trail to light rail and build an elevated greenway over it.	2	1	1	2	3	3	1	11	2	proposed	And idea to make Indianapolis a "model city" it "borrows much from New York City's High Line." As well, econ review uses High Line as comparison.

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Rosslyn, VA, United States of America	Freedom Park	An existing elevated walkway running through part of downtown Rosslyn and a plan to revamp it and expand it onto an underutilized section of an elevated street.	1	1	1	3	2	3	1	11	2	completed in 1996 and enhancements proposed	Per a city plan, Freedom Park is "Rosslyn's smaller scale version of New York City's High Line" and plans to transform a "former "Loop Road" into a public park invariably draws comparisons to New York City's more recently completed High Line."
Subaico, Australia	Subi Surf Park	Proposal to convert an underused football park into a surfing lagoon and add an elevated park around two sides.	2	1	2	3	2	3	1	12	2	proposed	Australian news outlet said the elevated park concept is "inspired by New York's High Line Park."

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Edmonton, Canada	Edmonton Funicular	Proposal for the development of a funicular and adjacent "urban staircase" with seating space.	2	1	3	1	3	3	1	12	2	proposed	According to the <i>Edmonton Journal</i> the project "takes inspiration from the High Line" and the lead planner looked at the High Line as a guide to make "linear space so usable and appealing." The developer spearheading the project describes it "like a 'High Line' park, what you'd find in lower Manhattan."

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Montreal, Canada	High Line at the incinerator	Convert and old incinerator into a park (using linear access ramp) and green center.	2	2	2	3	1	3	1	12	2	proposed	The backers see it as "the perfect place to give Montreal what New York got with the High Line."
Toronto, Canada	Gardiner Expressway Green Ribbon	Proposal to turn an elevated freeway into a linear park.	2	1	3	3	1	3	1	12	2	proposed	One local writer called converting the structure into a park "a High Line North."

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Toronto, Canada	King High Line	Proposal for an extended pedestrian bridge across an existing rail corridor and connect two areas.	2	1	1	3	3	3	1	12	2	proposed	Promoters make a direct appeal to the precedent of the High Line.
Santiago, Chile	Origami High Line	Proposal for a linear bridge park.	2	1	1	3	3	3	1	12	2	proposed	According to an article in <i>Arch Daily</i> the design parallels that of the High Line.

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Cape Town, South Africa	Cape Town High Line	Proposal by local design firm for a complex series of walkways and park space in between freeways.	2	2	2	3	1	3	1	12	2	proposed	Very little description available but called "Cape Town High Line.
s-Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands	Paleisbrug	An elevated park and pedestrian bridge.	2	1	1	3	3	3	1	12	2	completed in 2015	A bicycle advocate says it was "inspired by the High Line while another design media outlet says: "The new generation pedestrian bridges is more oriented on New York's High Line. It combined the leisure and fun of the High Line with a practical connection." Also, the landscape architect was Piet Oudolf.

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Hull, United Kingdom	Castle Street Bridge	Proposal for a new bridge across Castle Street.	2	1	1	3	3	3	1	12	2	proposed	A local architecture student came up with a design inspired by the High Line.

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London, United Kingdom	Barbican Highwalks	A system of bridges connecting and corridors in the large the Barbican Estate development (tied into Pedways of London and often thought of as part of)	1	1	1	3	3	3	1	12	2	completed 1960s and 70s	Makes an important connection to the modernist ideal of the High Line.
London, United Kingdom	Garden Bridge	Proposal for a pedestrian bridge over Thames with park on it.	2	1	1	3	3	3	1	12	2	proposed	Frequently compared to the High Line in media. <i>Slate</i> article asks if it is "London's answer to the High Line."

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London, United Kingdom	Mile End Green Bridge (also called Mile End Park)	A park bridge that connects two parts of a park over a roadway.	1	1	1	3	3	3	1	12	2	completed 1999	A <i>CityMetric</i> article on "All the parks the High Line copied" includes it.
London, United Kingdom	Pedways of the City	The postwar above grade network of walkways and bridges of modernist central London.	1	1	1	3	3	3	1	12	2	completed in 1950s and 60s	Makes an important connection to the modernist ideal of the High Line
London, United Kingdom	SkyCycle	Proposal for an elevated cycleway over London's existing railways.	2	1	1	3	3	3	1	12	2	proposed	A <i>New Statesman</i> article says it could be the answer to the High Line for London

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London, United Kingdom	Westway	Proposal to retrofit the 3.5-mile Westway flyover into a more "green" piece of infrastructure, including trails underneath.	2	1	2	3	2	3	1	12	2	proposed	According to organizer's blog "the 2012 High Line for London competition provides a major source of inspiration for the Green Westway campaign."
Little Rock, AR, United Kingdom	University Bridge	Student project for bridge over University Ave.	2	1	1	3	3	3	1	12	2	proposed	High Line and Green Bridge in London identified by project as precedents.

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Los Angeles, United States of America	6th Street Bridge Replacement	Replacement auto bridge with linear park underneath.	2	1	1	3	3	3	1	12	2	in construction	Seen as part of a remaking of space around the Los Angeles River that has the "transformative potential of New York's High Line."
Los Angeles, United States of America	High Line West	A proposed mixed-use development in West Hollywood that would include an elevated park. Details of the park are not clear.	2	1	1	3	3	3	1	12	2	park removed from project and name changed	The name, plus the inclusion of an "elevated park." Proposed in 2012 it appears to be using the hotness of the High Line as to bolster its value.

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Miami, FL, United States of America	Underline (formerly Greenlink)	Proposal to turn the space under the Miami Monorail into a high- design greenway.	2	1	3	3	1	3	1	12	2	proposed	Directly inspired by High Line and frequently compared in media and discourse.
Minneapolis/St . Paul, United States of America	West 29th Street	Proposal to create a pedestrian only boulevard.	2	1	3	3	1	3	1	12	2	proposed	Local media compares it to the High Line.
New York, United States of America	Green Line	Plan to turn a 40-block stretch of Broadway from Central Park to Union Square into a linear park.	2	1	3	3	1	3	1	12	2	proposed	<i>City Lab</i> asks, "Does New York Need a Second High Line" and <i>Gizmodo</i> treats it like an extension of the High Line phenomenon.

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New York, United States of America	Harlem Promenade	Elevated linear park along the Amtrak rail line in Harlem.	2	1	1	3	3	3	1	12	2	proposed	An <i>Inhabitat</i> article describes how Harlem is preparing for its own "High Line style park."
New York, United States of America	Jet Blue Terminal	A new green space atop a new arrival hall at JFK.	2	1	1	3	3	3	1	12	2	completed in 2015	Per the <i>New York Times</i> : ". . . Jet Blue hopes to replicate the experience of the High Line . . . Atop the extension it just added or international arrivals."

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New York, United States of America	Liberty Bridge	A proposed pedestrian and bicycle bridge over the Hudson River connecting Jersey City and to Battery Park in Manhattan.	2	1	1	3	3	3	1	12	2	proposed	<i>Fast Company</i> wrote: "It would be like the High Line, just higher."
New York, United States of America	Upper East Side Transfer Station	Convert access bridge to garbage transfer station into an elevated linear park.	2	1	2	3	2	3	1	12	2	proposed	Per the <i>Daily News</i> : Under the plan, a curving, quarter-mile-long ramp that will carry up to 500 garbage trucks a day would be relocated, covered and topped by a green walkway modeled after the High Line.

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Richmond, VA, United States of America	Low Line	Proposal for an at-grade trail under and next to existing rail infrastructure.	2	1	3	2	2	3	1	12	2	proposed	According to the City of Richmond, it "takes creative inspiration from the High Line."
San Francisco, United States of America	Natoma Alley	Alley behind SFMOMA turned in to an urban outdoor art galley	2	1	3	3	1	3	1	12	2	completed in 2016	Per the <i>San Francisco Chronicle</i> , it was inspired by the exhibition of art on High Line.

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Tampa/St. Petersburg, United States of America	Friendship Bridge	Proposal to replace/retrofit a decommissioned vehicle bridge, used as a pedestrian bridge for some time, with a new pedestrian bridge.	2	1	1	3	2	3	2	12	2	proposed	Compared to High Line by the <i>Tampa Bay News</i> .
Tarrytown, NY, United States of America	Tappen Zee Bridge	Proposal to reuse the soon to be replaced bridge as a walkway.	2	1	1	3	1	3	3	12	2	proposed	The <i>New York Times</i> and other outlets compare it to the High Line.

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Washington, D.C., United States of America	Dupont Underground	Proposal to convert an abandoned underground streetcar station into a public space.	2	3	3	1	1	3	1	12	3	proposed	<i>Arch Daily</i> calls it "High Line like."
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada	Claremont Access	A mountain access road to be partially converted to a linear park.	2	1	3	3	1	3	2	13	2	proposed	The idea is promoted by a local council person, who wrote an article on a local booster organizations website that stated: "[My] vision would be for a pathway cross-section that might resemble something like the High Line linear park in New York City."

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Toronto, Canada	Sky Park	An elevated park to be built around the city's central train station.	2	2	1	3	3	3	1	13	2	proposed	<i>Huffington Post</i> article describes Toronto's Sky Park "[i]s the City's Answer to High Line Envy."
Toronto, Canada	Under Gardiner	Proposal to turn the space under the Gardiner Freeway into a linear park	2	1	3	3	2	3	1	13	2	proposed	<i>Curbed</i> called it Toronto's "plans to make [it] into their version of the High Line."
Bari, Italy	Baricentrale Station	Proposal for an elevated park over railway and plaza around main train station.	2	2	2	3	2	3	1	13	2	proposed	An <i>Inhabitat</i> article calls it "High Line-Style Elevated Park."

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Mexico City, Mexico	Chapultec Project	Proposal for an elevated linear park over an existing park space.	2	1	2	3	3	3	1	13	2	proposed	Said to be directly inspired by Mexico city's general coordinator for its Public Space Authority visiting the High Line.
Charlotte, United States of America	Charlotte Rail Trail	Proposed 3.3-mile linear park next to new light rail line	2	1	2	2	3	3	2	13	2	proposed	Looking to make Charlotte cool and incorporate high design elements "supporters refer to the High Line in the same breath as the Rail Trail." Designers say inspiration coming from other sources but High Line's success invoked.

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Des Moines, United States of America	Skywalk Parks	Development above city garages with bridges and park space	2	2	1	3	3	3	1	13	2	proposed	The <i>Des Moines Register</i> : "New York City's High Line park has become a popular symbol of successful and innovative urban renewal projects. . . . A local developer thinks it can be replicated on a Des Moines-sized scale."
San Francisco, United States of America	Presidio Parkland	13 acres of planned new parkland at Golden Gate Bridge Recreation area designed by James Corner.	2	1	2	3	3	3	1	13	2	proposed	An article in the website <i>7x7</i> called it "SF's Own Version of NYC's High Line."

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San Francisco, United States of America	Transbay Transit Center	Large linear(ish) transit center project that will have a rooftop garden.	2	2	1	3	3	3	1	13	2	proposed	<i>An Arch Daily</i> article calls it "High Line inspired" but width makes it seem rather different — just a rooftop green space.
Scottsdale, United States of America	High Line Trail	A proposed new elevated pedestrian path over the Indian Bend Wash.	2	1	2	3	3	3	1	13	2	proposed	The website of the promoters of the idea directly call upon and feature the idea of the High Line: "We are not suggesting a replication of what has emerged in New York. But we can learn and borrow from the success."

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Seattle, United States of America	Overlook Walk	A planned elevated walk that will cross the new street between Pike Place Market and the waterfront.	2	1	2	3	3	3	1	13	2	proposed	According to an article in <i>City Lab</i> , Overlook Walk is "Seattle's answer to the High Line."
Montreal, Canada	Urban Promenade	A new "urban promenade" that will link the St. Lawrence River and Mount Royal	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	proposed	A large urban promenade reported to be inspired by the Promenade Plantée, La Rambla and the High Line.

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Toronto, Canada	Green Line	A proposed 5 km at-grade park through an existing "hydro corridor" and connect nine parks and parkettes.	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	proposed	<i>The Star</i> reports on the project: "Toronto is starting to take some small steps toward an ambitious plan for a 5 km linear park like New York's High Line."
Toronto, Canada	Logan Green Field and Langford Parkette	Plan for a linear greenway to link a series of parkettes.	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	proposed	<i>blogTO</i> says this project might achieve the city's ambition of a High Line-like park.
Toronto, Canada	The Flood Line	Turn part of Black Creek into a linear recreation area.	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	proposed	Inspired by the High Line and bolstered by how "Toronto has quietly envied the genius concept."

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Sejong City, South Korea	Sejong City High Line	A proposed shopping mall with a 500-meter riverside promenade.	2	1	1	3	3	3	3	14	3	proposed	Per the <i>Korea Bizwire</i> : "The shopping mall will also feature a 500-meter riverside high line just like the High Line, the linear park in New York City."
Doha, Qatar	Sharq Crossing	A Calatrava designed bridge over bay with an elevated park.	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	proposed	<i>Inhabitat</i> writes: "Santiago Calatrava's Beautiful Sharq Crossing Bridge Will Bring a High Line Style Park to Doha."
Moscow, Russia	Zaryadye Park	Proposal for park in central Moscow with a small elevated promenade.	2	2	2	3	3	3	1	14	3	proposed	Described as a park inspired by the High Line in an article in <i>Conde Nast Traveler</i> .

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Sheffield, United Kingdom	Grey to Green	At-grade "green corridor" in the central business district.	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	under construction	Professor Nigel Dunnet in <i>The Star</i> : "The most similar one at the moment is the High Line in New York City which has transformed that whole area of the city and part of the idea is for Sheffield is to do the same."

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Adirondack Park, NY, United States of America	Wild Walk	A elevated trail (suspension bridges connecting various structures) in the Wild Center to allow visitors to get a new view on the nature park.	2	1	1	3	3	3	3	14	3	completed 2015	According to <i>amNewYork</i> , an online newspaper: "A new elevated trail through Adirondack Park promises to be the forest equivalent of the High Line" and "The Wildwalk has an objective similar to that of High Line on Manhattan's west side: to show people aspects of an environment from a different point of view. The High Line even served as inspiration, as people involved developing Wild Walk walked the High Line during the planning stages."

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Boston, United States of America	Rose Kennedy Greenway	A 1.5 mile at-grade greenway in downtown Boston.	1	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	completed 2008	Direct comparisons made on lines of greenways and urban amenities. Intention to add the cool design factor and symbolic importance of High Line, but not particularly similar in key way. Done around same time as High Line, though related to big dig — it's design, which was an afterthought to the long infrastructure project is influenced by High Line but it did not appear to play a role in the production of the basic facility.

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Houston, United States of America	Astrodome	Proposal to turn the vacant Astrodome into a high-design indoor park	2	3	3	3	1	3	1	14	3	proposed	Numerous blogs and articles compare it to the High Line and say that it could be the next big thing.
Los Angeles, United States of America	Harry Bridges Boulevard Buffer	Proposal to convert an abandoned strip of land near Los Angeles harbor to a linear park	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	proposed	An <i>inhabitat</i> article called it a "West Coast 'High Line' park."

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Los Angeles, United States of America	Los Angeles River Greenway Project	Project to create a system of greenways and parks along the LA River.	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	proposed	An article includes it in projects for the "High Line West" Another article about the head of the organization spearheading the project reports: "As inspiration . . . Brownson [the Executive Director] pegs the success of the High Line in New York City."
Los Angeles, United States of America	Park 101	Proposal to cover 101 freeway with a (kind of) linear park.	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	in progress	Per the <i>Los Angeles Times</i> : "Freeway cap park can be L.A.'s High Line."

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Los Angeles, United States of America	Space 134	A proposed park over the 134 Freeway in Glendale.	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	proposed	An Op-Ed in the <i>Los Angeles Times</i> asks if "freeway parks can be L.A.'s High Line" while the project's Vision Plan (prepared by a professional design team and the City of Glendale) use the High Line as a precedent and justification.

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Miami, FL, United States of America	Biscayne Line	A proposed three-mile public bayfront public boardwalk connecting Edgewater to downtown.	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	proposed	According to the organization promoting the project: "Design for the Biscayne Line is inspired by great urban public spaces, such as New York City's High Line." Notably, a major backer is the Related Company, a developer who has done a large amount of real estate development surrounding the High Line in New York.

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Miami, FL, United States of America	Miami Marine Stadium	Proposal to create a park around an old marine stadium.	2	3	3	3	1	3	1	14	3	proposed	Proponents wants it to become Miami's rival to High Line. Robert Hammond was invited to speak about the similarities.

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Miami, FL, United States of America	River Landing	A proposed 50 foot-wide landscaped "linear" park along the Miami river from development as part of a large mixed-use development	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	proposed	Per the <i>Wall Street Journal</i> : "The inspiration for River Landing's linear park comes from New York's High Line" and "[w]hen we were deciding what to develop here, we had just been in New York and walked the High Line," said Andrew Hellinger, manager of River Landing Development LLC, who, along with partner Coralee Penabad, is developing River Landing. "We liked the concept, an open environment among the concrete structures."

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Minneapolis/St . Paul, United States of America	Nicollet Mile/Mall	Proposed refurbishment of pedestrian mall.	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	proposed	Per the <i>Minneapolis Post</i> : "Some politicians have termed the revised Nicollet Mall in Downtown Minneapolis as our 'High Line,' after the elevated park in Manhattan. It isn't on an abandoned rail trestle like the High Line, but it is long and sort of skinny like the High Line, and the lead architect, James Corner Field Operation, is one of the lead architects of High Line. So, close enough."

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Minneapolis/St . Paul, United States of America	River Balcony	A proposed elevated path through and around buildings leading to the Mississippi River.	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	proposed	<i>The Line</i> , a local news outlet, ran an article titled "St. Paul planning its own version of NYC's High Line along the river," which makes multiple comparisons to the High Line.

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New York, United States of America	Dryline	Proposed linear park and flood barrier/management system running along the shore of lower Manhattan.	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	proposed	Interpreted as part of the spectacular linear park movement and having the same drawing power as the High Line.
New York, United States of America	Forsyth Plaza	An elevated triangular park near bridge offramp.	2	3	1	3	3	3	1	14	3	under construction	Described by multiple new outlets as a "mini High Line Park."
New York, United States of America	Liberty Park	Park overlooking 9/11 Memorial.	2	3	1	3	3	3	1	14	3	under construction	Time Out: "The Financial District will be getting its own High Line this summer."

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Philadelphia, United States of America	Schuylkill Banks Boardwalk	A river pier converted to an urban park and designed by James Corner.	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	completed in 2014	Compared to High Line and argued as superior in local media.
San Antonio, United States of America	San Pedro Creek	Proposed linear park to be built along a refurbished creek in downtown.	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	proposed	The <i>San Antonio Express-News</i> wrote: "Helping inspire designers was New York's High Line, conceived by San Antonio native Robert Hammond, which repurposed idle rail lines into a linear park. Henry Muñoz III of Munoz & Co., said the creek project, like the High Line, will transform underutilized assets, help businesses and unite nearby communities."

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Seattle, United States of America	Seattle CAP	Proposal to create a 5.5-acre linear park by capping the sunken 5 freeway.	2	1	3	3	3	3	1	14	3	proposed	A writer in <i>Next City</i> called it "a High Line for an existing transit corridor."

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New York, United States of America	Hub on the Hudson	An architect's proposal to connect the High Line, via pedestrian bridge, to an island in the Hudson River with a recreation center.	2	2	2	3	3	3	1	14	3	proposed	One of the more difficult to categorize, it actual is meant to extend the High Line — so is clearly inspired by.

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Menlo Park, CA, United States of America	Facebook Building	New office building with long rooftop park.	2	3	1	3	3	3	2	15	3	completed in 2015	Facebook's representative compares it to the High Line in New York and Wired Magazine writes that "[i]ndeed the building blends with the lowlands of Menlo park, a bit like the High Line dovetails with the very urban landscape in Chelsea and the Manhattan Meatpacking District."

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Seattle, United States of America	Grand Connection	At-grade bike and pedestrian corridor connecting various existing public spaces in Bellevue.	2	1	3	3	3	3	2	15	3	proposed	According to the <i>Daily Journal of Commerce</i> : "City officials envision this "Grand Connection" as a must-see urban experience like the High Line in New York City and River Walk in San Antonio."

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Edmonton, Canada	The Quarters Urban Balcony	A triangle of land on a hill overlooking the Saskatchewan River that a developer proposes to turn into an "urban balcony" park in conjunction with an adjacent redevelopment project.	2	3	3	3	3	3	1	16	3	proposed	The <i>Edmonton Journal</i> article title is a "Manhattan-Style 'High Line' park promised for the Quarters urban balcony."

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Ithaca, United States of America	The Cayuga Waterfront Trail	A growing multiuse trail system connecting destinations with the lakefront.	2	1	3	3	3	3	3	16	3	completed in phases: 2003, 2010, one phase pending	Article in the <i>Ithaca Voice</i> : "Call it Ithaca's 'High Line': The Cayuga Waterfront Trail is a great way to enjoy a side of our city almost none of us have ever seen." The basic comparison is that of seeing your city in a new and different way.
New York, United States of America	Pier 55	A high-design floating park on Pier 55 near the High Line.	2	3	3	3	3	3	1	16	3	proposed	By the same designer as the proposed London Garden Bridge and backed with funds from Barry Diller and Dianne von Furstenberg. They are compared in news media and blog frequently.

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