



Cities fighting climate woes hasten “green gentrification”

***Seawalls, parks, and elevated buildings can protect against rising tides. But they can also push the price of housing up, and longtime residents out.***

*By Adam Rogers for Wired.com, February 23, 2020*

“Fighting climate disasters is a good idea for the planet, but can have unintended consequences for neighborhoods. ‘In order to construct a green, resilient park or shoreline, we get rid of lower-income housing ... and behind it or next to it, you’ll have higher-income housing being built,’ says Isabelle Anguelovski, an urban geographer at the Autonomous University of Barcelona who co-wrote an article about green gentrification [in December’s Proceedings of the National Academies of Science](#) (PNAS).

“In Philadelphia, Anguelovski and her team [studied a program](#) to build flood-fighting infrastructure like parkland, green roofs, and curbside swales to absorb rainwater before it hit sewers. This, too, was an engine of gentrification. ‘What you see on the maps is that the areas that gained the greatest amount of green resilient infrastructure are also those that became the most gentrified,’ Anguelovski says. ‘And the areas that blacks and Latinos have had to move to between 2000 and 2016 have been the areas that got the least infrastructure.’

“ ‘Green gentrification is getting used as a tool to say we shouldn’t be investing in a neighborhood, in these improvements that under-resourced communities deserve,’ says Laura Tam, sustainability and resilience director for the urban planning advocacy group SPUR. ‘The problem is we don’t have effective housing policy that prevents people from being displaced when their neighborhood gets amenities important for any neighborhood, including sewer service, flood protection, and parks.’

“As Anguelovski’s team argued in an [article in PNAS](#) last December, local and state governments and planning agencies should have policies that guard against green gentrification. That means requiring developers to build a certain number of affordable homes on-site, guaranteeing residents the right to stay, and figuring out ways to make sure existing affordable housing doesn’t convert to market rate[.]”

**[Read the full article here.](#)**

*Richard Davis, Northern News associate editor, adds:*

In 2017, the year-long [Resilient by Design Bay Area Challenge](#) (RbD) asked experts to design implementable solutions to sea-level rise, severe storms, flooding, and earthquakes that also accounted for critical social issues, such as gentrification.

Debra Guenther, FASLA, wrote in the July/August 2018 issue of Northern News about



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landscape design firm Mithun’s experience with RbD in North Richmond, California (*Reshaping the bay for sea-level rise and creating affordable housing*, pp. 4, 17-18). Building upon the previously developed North Richmond Shoreline Vision Plan, Mithun crafted a four-point strategy that would allow local residents to benefit from green infrastructure investments. These were (1) fostering resilience through paths to home ownership, (2) planting 20,000 trees, which act as natural air filters, (3) integrating marshes into shoreline industrial areas, and (4) encouraging the use of Wildcat Creek Trail.

To learn more about Mithun’s initiative to build green infrastructure in North Richmond along with practices that fostered participatory decision-making and generational wealth building in a historically disinvested community, [read the full article here](#).