

Parks and Housing for All: A Better Urban Future A World Urban Parks Statement



Evening at Bishan. Photo by pagodashophouse. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kallang_River_at_Bishan_Park.jpg

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A World Urban Parks Statement



“By 2030, UN-Habitat estimates that 3 billion people, about 40 per cent of the world’s population, will need access to adequate housing. This translates into a demand for 96,000 new affordable and accessible housing units every day. Additionally, an estimated 100 million people worldwide are homeless and one in four people live in harmful conditions that to their health, safety and prosperity. Access to housing is a precondition for access to employment, education, health, and social services. In order to address the current housing challenges, all levels of government should put housing at the centre of urban policies by placing people and human rights at the forefront of urban sustainable development.” *UN-Habitat, Housing Challenge*

Two thirds of humans on the planet are expected to be urban dwellers by 2050. This shift will exacerbate already dire housing needs in cities across the world, especially those in emerging countries. World Urban Parks recognizes the need for quality housing as well as equitable and fair access to quality open space. Parks can play a role in this effort. Housing and park advocates have long worked apart from, at times even at odds with, each other. Accessible parks are critical to quality affordable housing, and housing impacts and opportunities are essential considerations for park projects.

Accessible parks near affordable housing

Parks play a significant role in creating healthy cities, people, and societies. They will only become more critical as the world addresses climate change. But too often the benefits of green spaces accrue to those who need them least and are lacking for those that need them most. This is especially true for dense urban communities, where living space is limited and public places serve myriad purposes, as living rooms, places of business, fitness centers, childcare facilities, and much more.

Standards exist for the construction of high-quality, accessible, sustainable, and affordable housing. These standards must include the (mandatory) provision of high quality, public green space within easy walking distance. Urban planners, especially in the rapidly growing cities of emerging countries, need to set aside land for parks so that everyone has access to housing with quality open space nearby.

Park development without displacement

Park managers must also reckon with the exclusion, intentional or otherwise, of particular park uses and users, whether based on race, gender, culture, class, or creed. A nearby park that feels unwelcoming to those housed nearby will not benefit them. Criminalizing unhoused individuals, especially in public spaces, causes undue harm to those already struggling. Parks must be designed by listening to and addressing the needs of its neighbors and users, especially those most in need.

In some cases, park development has run counter to the goal of housing for all. Instead of providing better access to quality green space, these investments have caused rapid property value increases, displacing lower-income residents to areas without these amenities. Civic and Community leaders, City Planners and Park Managers must confront these impacts and develop new, collaborative modes of development to ensure quality parks and housing for all and truly meet the promise of a better urban future. World Urban Parks is committed to **Parks and Housing for All.**

World Urban Parks is a forum for the exchange of ideas on common environmental, social and economic challenges where urban parks, open space and recreation are part of the solution. Be part of the solution to ensure equitable access to quality parks and green space.

#UrbanOctober #WorldHabitatDay #WorldCitiesDay

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