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The Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative: An Attempt at Community Building through Park Revitalization

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The Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative: An Attempt at Community Building through Park Revitalization

by

Maya Marie Harper

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
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The Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative: An Attempt at Community Building through Park Revitalization

Maya Harper

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I discuss the Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative, an initiative to build community in a gentrifying neighborhood. I was primarily hired to find out what changes residents of Tampa Heights desired in their chosen park, observe the Greenprinting process, and write a report that could be used in future initiatives.

Due to my Anthropological training, I paid attention to the wider context associated with this project. I paid as much attention to who was not there as I did to who was there. The applied nature of my program enabled me to not only document the socioeconomic factors that affected the project, but to say something at the time of the project, so that change could be implemented.

Research questions involved trying to figure out how residents envision their neighborhood park, as well as the broader question of how the socioeconomic situation in Tampa Heights affects the Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative. I asked whether a park revitalization could lead to residents uniting across various boundaries, and if so, how. I discovered that the Tampa Heights Greenprinting process highlighted some of the socioeconomic tensions in Tampa Heights. These tensions are related to the current status of the neighborhood as a gentrifying area. Perhaps, as a result of the Greenprinting process, residents will recognize that to truly build a cohesive community, they must
address various issues in their community, such as gentrification, outside investment (instead of community-rooted investment), the possible demolition of Robles Park Housing Village, and the lack of youth programs in their community.
Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis is based on my participation in the Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative, an initiative that the Mayor’s Beautification Program (MBP) designed with the purpose of engaging residents in working together to renovate a park in their neighborhood. The Mayor’s Beautification Program is a non-profit, non-governmental institution whose mission is “to build communities that value and contribute to Tampa Bay's natural outdoor environment by helping to improve and beautify public areas, parks and streetscapes” (Mayor’s Beautification Program 2004).

“Greenprinting” refers to the Mayor’s Beautification Program’s concept of the importance of a neighborhood’s green spaces as cultural markers of a neighborhood. The Mayor’s Beautification Program (MBP) promotes this value through their Greenprinting Initiative. The Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative, one of a series of Greenprinting Initiatives that the MBP will be implementing around Tampa, allows people to come together around a project. The Tampa Heights Civic Association submitted the grant application to the MBP that brought the project to Tampa Heights, and they remain involved in the initiative. The project is funded by the F.E. Lykes Foundation.

I originally entered into the internship as a way to learn more about youth organizations in Tampa Heights. My supervisor, the head of the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association and a member of the Tampa Heights Civic Association, believed that we would uncover a lot about the state of youth and youth programs through the initial asset mapping that was to be performed by a collaborating institution. The asset mapping
was intended to provide residents with visual information that could theoretically enable them to make an objective decision on which park should be renovated.

As the graduate intern from the Department of Applied Anthropology, I worked to collect data and also to introduce data gathering methods to a USF “Communication, Culture and Community” Class. This class was taught by Dr. Janna Jones, who worked with one of her previous classes to put together a collection of interviews with Tampa Heights residents called *The Documentation of Daily Life in Tampa Heights*. My entry into the project came largely at the request of Lena Young Green, my internship supervisor. Originally I had planned to map the youth organizations, youth services, and youth resources in Tampa Heights, but was coming into problems accessing the data.

The collaborating institute on the Greenprinting Initiative, the Florida Center for Community Design and Redevelopment, was believed to have access to more social indicators data than I could access independently. Green, former president of the Tampa Heights Civic Association, and current president of the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association, was aware that in gathering data about park needs, it was likely that I would also uncover a lot about the state of youth and youth programs in the neighborhood. She had been active in the process of putting together the Tampa Heights neighborhood plan, which was largely masterminded by the Tampa Heights Civic Association. She also played a leading role in bringing the Greenprinting Initiative to Tampa Heights.

Young Green informed me of the steps that the community had already made towards community building as well as some of the problems and conflicts that the neighborhood had faced along the way. I learned a lot about Tampa Heights and the challenges that face residents of gentrifying communities who hope to engage in
community building. However, I did not find out as much about youth programs as I would have liked. Though the Greenprinting Initiative was to involve collaboration between institutes, this collaboration did not yield the results that we had hoped. A project that started out with dual purposes started narrowing for me. I did not get the statistics I had hoped for from the collaborating institute. My interviews and observations did lead to some conclusions about youth organizations, but the bulk of this thesis will be on the Greenprinting process itself.

After residents voted on a park, my role transitioned more to finding out what changes residents of Tampa Heights desired in their chosen park, observing the Greenprinting process, and writing a report based on my findings. My training in Applied Anthropology has given me helpful qualitative data-gathering skills, an appreciation for diversity, and a focus on working against inequality. These skills were useful in the Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative because of the complexity involved with stimulating resident-driven participation in a gentrifying neighborhood such as the one in question. It may have been easier to just assume that the neighborhood was represented in the Initiative through the Tampa Heights Civic Association, and go forward in creating a “best practices” model based mainly on the participation of this group of residents. However, due to my Anthropological training, I paid attention to the wider context. I paid as much attention to who was not there as I did to who was there. The applied nature of my program enabled me to not only document the socio-economic factors that affected the project, but to say something at the time of the project, so that change could be implemented.
My research questions involved trying to figure out how residents envision their neighborhood park, as well as the broader question of how the socioeconomic situation in Tampa Heights affects the Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative. I asked whether a park revitalization could lead to residents uniting across various boundaries, and if so, how. As stated before, I was asked to put together a model to be used by the MBP and residents who attempt a Greenprinting Initiative in their neighborhood. This task was difficult, given that every neighborhood is unique and there is no “cookie-cutter” model that can be imposed on neighborhoods to create the changes desired by the MBP and the residents. Participant-observation and an ethnographic attention to process, two hallmarks of an anthropological way of thinking, were useful techniques in attempting to put together a model. Even if there is no model that will automatically bring neighborhood cohesiveness, lessons learned can be useful in presenting guidelines for future initiatives.

The Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative is a project in community building through park revitalization. This initiative is part of a 10 year program managed by the Mayor’s Beautification Program, a nonprofit organization, to improve one new park in Tampa every year. The F.E. Lykes Foundation gives $75,000 as seed money for each of the 10 parks. This foundation is headed by Norma Gene Lykes Burr, a descendent of one of Tampa’s prominent businessmen. The twenty-six neighborhoods located in or around the Tampa Enterprise Community are eligible to apply for Tampa Greenprinting Initiative funds.

The *Tampa Enterprise Community* is an 11 square mile zone selected by the federal government for special attention. The Tampa Enterprise Community
encompasses Sulphur Springs, Belmont/Jackson Heights, North Tampa Heights, East Tampa, Tampa Heights, West Tampa, Ybor City, and Palmetto Beach. Economic impoverishment and unemployment are common characteristics of the neighborhoods in the Enterprise zone. The median income in the Enterprise Community is $11,768, about half of the median income for the city of Tampa as a whole (Barber 2001; YO grant proposal 2000). Jessica Barber explains in her 2001 thesis, “In 1994, Enterprise communities were designated by President Clinton as part of a community revitalization initiative to promote public and private partnerships towards sustainable economic and community development” (Barber 2001: 12). Enterprise communities are given federal grant money to be put towards beneficial programs and are eligible to apply for additional grant monies, such as Youth Opportunity (YO) Movement grants.

Tampa Heights happens to be located in the Tampa Enterprise community. Seminole Heights, the first park to be revitalized, is not. Tampa Heights Civic Association members believe that their neighborhood was selected because they had clearly defined goals and a strong Civic Association that could act as steward to the process.

The Mayor’s Beautification Program (MBP) states in its 2002 document *Tampa’s Greenprinting Initiative: Growing Neighborhoods from the Grassroots Up*, that Tampa’s Greenprinting Initiative was derived from the Trust for Public Land’s Greenprinting concept. Greenprinting is like a blueprint, except the goal is for residents to decide what they want to do with their open space. To summarize, “Tampa’s Greenprinting Initiative (TGI) is a ten-year project that builds the capacity of residents to address pressing issues
in their neighborhoods, beginning with the revitalization of one public open space in
Tampa’s inner-city each year” (Mayor’s Beautification Program 2002: 1).

The ideology behind the initiative, according to the sponsoring nonprofit
organization, the Mayor’s Beautification Program, is that park revitalization
(“Greenprinting”) will foster a sense of community among residents. Residents are
urged to unite around the revitalization of a park in Tampa Heights. The Greenprinting
Initiative rests upon the culturally rooted idea of parks as valuable open green spaces
where residents can socialize and build a feeling of community (Kuo et. al, 1998; Jacobs
1961). Increasing a feeling of community among residents is a first step towards
increasing community capacity to make positive neighborhood changes.

The Florida Center for Community Design and Research, a University of South
Florida Communications class, and the USF Department of Anthropology collaborated to
gather data. This collaboration will be discussed in further detail later. The research can
be separated into 2 phases for purposes of clarity. I will call these pre-park selection and
post-park selection.

The question guiding my research was: Can this park renovation work to build
community within such a diverse area as Tampa Heights? I cannot answer this question
definitely in this thesis, since the process continues at the time of this writing. I will
however, describe the process, placing special emphasis on the socioeconomic issues that
were highlighted in the process of designing this plan.
Setting

Tampa Heights is an urban neighborhood just north of downtown Tampa. The area is bounded by Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard on the north, North Boulevard on the west, Nebraska Avenue on the east and Scott and Cass Streets on the south. The Hillsborough River runs along the western border of Tampa Heights. The area is very close to downtown, which is one of the reasons why the City of Tampa has placed a lot of emphasis on it recently.

Figure 1: Map of Tampa Heights


Tampa Heights boasts a rich history as Tampa’s first residential suburb (Leonard 1978). Residents have learned to capitalize on this history. In 1995 they were awarded a
national and state historic district designation. The area was originally called ‘the Heights’ by Thomas Puch Kennedy because of its high altitude in relation to the rest of the city. Residents believed that by moving there, they could avoid the yellow fever epidemic of 1887. Joseph Robles, who was “an Indian-fighter, Confederate hero, and a land developer” (Pizzo 1968: 25) is credited with being the neighborhood’s developer (Tampa City Planning n.d.: 6). When he moved from Benton, Florida to Hillsborough County in 1850, Robles “pioneered large sections of land from modern-day Temple Terrace down to Robles Pond” (Historic Tampa-Hillsborough County Preservation Board n.d.: 24). Joseph Robles is believed to have had a homestead at the location of the current Robles Park (3305 N. Avon).

From the 1890s to 1920s, Tampa Heights was a relatively affluent suburb with many beautiful homes. By the 1920s, residents could easily take a trolley to downtown Tampa, Ybor City, west Tampa, or towards Sulfur Springs. The north of Tampa Heights never reached the upper middle class status of Southern Tampa Heights. Instead, according to the North Tampa Heights Historic Sites Survey, “by the middle of the second decade… the area was becoming a solidly middle to working class neighborhood… the area was comprised of frame vernacular dwellings and modest bungalows” (Tampa City Planning n.d.: 6).

Marston Leonard writes that during its early years, Tampa Heights was a predominantly Anglo-Protestant neighborhood, with some Latinos arriving due to its proximity to Ybor City (1978:4). The Historic Tampa-Hillsborough County Preservation Board asserts that Tampa Heights has been “racially and culturally mixed” since the 1890s (1990: 9). The ethnicities were then segregated into various areas. The area from
Central Avenue to Tampa Street was largely Anglo-American, there were mainly Hispanics and Italians in the area east of Mitchell and south of Palm, and in southeast Tampa Heights there was a middle class African American community (Historic Tampa-Hillsborough County Preservation Board 1990: 9).

The black presence in Tampa Heights appears to be overlooked in some documents discussing Tampa Heights. Viola B. Muse, a “Negro Ethnography” field worker, writes in 1936 that the “Robles Pond” section of Tampa Heights was “one of the oldest negro neighborhoods in Tampa” (1936:7). In 1936, Robles Pond had a population of 300-400 people (Muse 1936:7). She writes that this black neighborhood was “entirely surrounded” and presumably encroached upon by whites (Muse 1936: 7). First United Brethren, located at 3300 N. Nebraska Avenue in Tampa Heights, is “one of only five large brick churches owned by a black congregation in the 1920s” (Historic Tampa-Hillsborough County Preservation Board 1990: 7). The existence of this historically black church reminds us that blacks in Tampa Heights were important to the ascendancy of the area. Several other properties in Tampa Heights were also built by African Americans. Muse writes that other neighborhoods close to Tampa Heights, such as West Hyde Park and College Hill, were predominately inhabited or founded by African Americans.

By the 1930s, Florida and Nebraska Avenues had been made into commercial streets. Some write that the invention of automobiles led to the decline of Tampa Heights (Historic Tampa-Hillsborough Preservation Board 1986; Leonard 1978). According to the writers of the North Tampa Heights Historic Sites Survey, the Depression and World War II also promoted the expansion of people out into much farther suburbs. By the 1950s, Tampa Heights was a mix of elderly residents and “younger, low income families,
many from the nearby housing projects or displaced by urban renewal in Ybor City” (Leonard 1978:7).

By 1949, some areas of Tampa Heights were considered some of the worst in the nation. Robert Saunders writes that the “Scrubb,” an area designated as “one of the worst slum areas in the nation” by the Urban League, became the focus of an urban renewal project in 1948-1949 (Saunders n.d.: 3). The “Scrubb” was located right next to downtown. The boundaries were “Central Avenue on the west, Nebraska on the east, Scott street on the north, and Cass Street on the south” (Saunders n.d.: 3). This area cannot be placed exclusively into the category of West Tampa, Tampa Heights, or Ybor City (Janus Research/Piper Archaeology 1992: 177).

The construction of the interstate in the 1960s further disrupted the community, erasing some areas in Tampa Heights and generally making the neighborhood less appealing to residents. By the 1960s, south Tampa Heights contained the lowest percentage of homeowners in Tampa (Leonard 1978:7). In 1979, the City of Tampa rejected North Tampa Heights’ application for community block grants because there were not enough homeowners in the neighborhood (Leonard 1978:7). Then, in 1981, the Neighborhood Housing Services selected Tampa Heights as a revitalization site. This meant that low income families could receive low interest home loans (Historic Tampa-Hillsborough County Preservation Board 1986).

Around the 1980s, groups in Tampa, particularly the Tampa Heights Civic Association, began to draw upon its historic significance to revive the current neighborhood (Gilpin 1997). Tampa Preservation, Inc. (TPI) also capitalized on the
historic houses in the neighborhood, renovating and building 51 houses in the Tampa Heights area (Gettleman 1997:1B).

Recently Tampa Heights was the first Tampa neighborhood to come up with a comprehensive 10 year plan. According to the Tampa Heights Plan, initiated by the Tampa Heights Civic Association and other community leaders, residents of Tampa Heights plan to revitalize their community by mobilizing their pooled assets.

Tampa Heights is an area of socioeconomic diversity. There is an incoming crop of middle class professionals who take advantage of Tampa Heights’ excellent location in relation to downtown Tampa. They are currently gentrifying the area. Their arrival has caused long-time residents to be displaced as their land becomes more valuable and they can no longer afford to live there. The population of Tampa Heights is 8,450 persons.

For the purpose of these calculations, Tampa Heights includes census tracts 29, 30, 41, and 42. The neighborhood partially spills over into census tract 40, but this report will disregard tract 40 in calculations representing Tampa Heights as a whole. The following tables are all from the US Census 2000, accessed through the internet.

The ethnic diversity of Tampa Heights will now be discussed in order to paint a picture of the neighborhood. Tampa Heights has a large “minority” population. Black Americans make up 58% of the population; White Americans make up 32%; and 22% of the total population is of Spanish origin. There are very few Asians and Native Americans in the neighborhood.
Table 1: “RACIAL” COMPOSITION
US Census 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Census Tract 29</th>
<th>Census Tract 30</th>
<th>Census Tract 40</th>
<th>Census Tract 41</th>
<th>Census Tract 42</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td>2,218</td>
<td>3,526</td>
<td>1,479</td>
<td>1,176</td>
<td>1,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population of one race:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White alone</td>
<td>2,128</td>
<td>3,441</td>
<td>1,444</td>
<td>1,149</td>
<td>1,486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American alone</td>
<td>1,168</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska Native alone</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>2,562</td>
<td>1,312</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian alone</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some other race alone</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is also a significant youth population in Tampa Heights. More than 33% of the Tampa Heights population is youth. This statistic would rise with the inclusion of the appropriate section of tract 40, which is made up of 48% youth. Interestingly, almost half of the residents of tract 30 are youth. The high youth population suggests that there should be structured, supervised activities put in place.

Table 2: YOUTH POPULATION BY PERCENTAGE
US Census 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Under 5yrs</th>
<th>5-9 yrs</th>
<th>10-14 yrs</th>
<th>15-19 yrs</th>
<th>Total Percent youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tract 29</strong></td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tract 30</strong></td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tract 41</strong></td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tract 42</strong></td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Poverty is also relatively high in the Tampa Heights area. Many residents of the area live below the poverty level. The prevalence of poverty is especially apparent from the statistics by census tract. According to Census definitions, Tampa Heights is an area of extreme poverty. There is not one tract in Tampa Heights that falls below 20% impoverished. The Census Bureau defines high-poverty neighborhoods as those tracts
where at least 20% of the residents live in poverty (Ihlanfeldt 1998). Jargowsky (1997) defines extreme-poverty neighborhoods as those where 40 percent or more of the residents live in poverty (see also Ihlanfeldt 1998). The Tampa Heights neighborhood has an overall household poverty rate of 36.5%. Rates of household poverty in tracts 30 and 41 are 46% and 48% respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Tract</th>
<th>Tract 29</th>
<th>Tract 30</th>
<th>Tract 41</th>
<th>Tract 42</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total households 1999</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>1,204</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income in 1999 below poverty level</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage below poverty</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We may also note that there are large differences between the tracts in terms of poverty. Tract 29 consists of 23.5% of residents below the poverty line, whereas in tract 41, almost half of the residents are impoverished. This difference may reflect the concentration of poverty in the public housing, as well as the possibility that middle class residents who have moved into the neighborhood (thereby gentrifying it) tend to settle in approximately the same area.

The statistics do not define the Tampa Heights neighborhood, nor do they define the people within the neighborhood’s borders. Tampa Heights is actually a very vibrant neighborhood. The community was the first in Tampa to write its own 10 year plan. Now other neighborhoods are following suit. Residents have a sense of pride in the history of the area, as evidenced by the Tampa Heights Civic Association’s Annual Tour of (Historic) Homes. The Tampa Heights Civic Association is supporting the change in
the community, and the renovation of Robles Park is one project aimed at changing the neighborhood’s image.

Because of its location convenient to downtown, as well as its historic buildings, Tampa Heights appears to be a perfect target for “revitalization”. The Mayor’s Heights Project, a 5 year residential and nonresidential development project started in 1997, under Mayor Greco. This project was based upon the idea that the location of Tampa Heights directly north of downtown makes it an especially important place for the city to revitalize. It was coordinated by the Tampa Economic Development Corporation and former Mayor Greco. Though the Mayor’s Heights Project ended with the previous mayor, the current mayor also has placed a special emphasis on neighborhoods such as Tampa Heights.

Residents and investors see great potential in the area. There are already plans for increased commercial activity. GTE Federal Credit Union already plans to build two buildings at 711 E. Henderson Road, which will cost $22 million. According to Jose Patino Girona, the president of GTE Federal Credit Union chose Tampa Heights “because it is a growing area, land was affordable, and it is centrally located for many employees” (Girona 2003a). However, I have not heard of any explicit plans to hire residents of Tampa Heights for the businesses. Many, such as Ralph Schuler, former president of Tampa Heights Civic Association, are heralding the “rebirth of the area”. Schuler has stated that “Tampa Heights is finally digging itself out of the gutter” (Matus 2003:1).

Councilman Kevin White agrees with the characterization of Tampa Heights as an area on the upswing, declaring that “Tampa Heights is going to be the next Hyde Park of
Tampa.” White says that the community residents served to “get the ball rolling,” and that he does not mean necessarily a change in housing. Girona writes “there is a housing boom in the area, but White would like to see investments in cafes and restaurants” (Girona 2003a). One wonders how the investment could possibly just stop there.

Hyde Park is an area which has capitalized on its historic status, to great economic benefit, and Tampa Heights has the potential to do the same thing. The historic homes in Tampa have brought new residents into the area, and the Tampa Heights Civic Association’s Tour of Homes serves to bring in revenue as well as to let outsiders see the beautiful homes in Tampa Heights.

Politicians as well as residents want more business and more dollars coming into the community. However, there is no talk in the aforementioned articles about what will happen to the residents as the area becomes economically vibrant and property values rise. For instance, homes in Hyde Park are quite expensive (Zink 2004). When the prices of homes rise, previous residents often cannot afford to live there anymore, and gentrification ensues. People with more money to spend move in as previous residents move out – or are pushed out. If Tampa Heights became the next Hyde Park, the area would also take on the issues that come with this type of revitalization.

Some would say that Tampa Heights is already beginning its economic ascent. As of February 2003, Bank of America planned to develop 300 new condos and 75-100 single-family homes in Tampa Heights, on the riverfront. These homes will be priced from 150,000 to 300,000 (Thurston 2003). Other redevelopment projects listed in the Tampa Heights Newsletter are:
- **The Stetson Law School** (80,000 square feet) The Hillsborough County Bar Association also plans to construct a building there.

- **The Sanctuary** – 32 loft apartments, 4500 square feet

- **Waterworks Park** – 15 acre park along Hillsborough River

- **Children’s board of Hillsborough County** – 25,000 square feet of office space

- **Law Offices of Williams, Shifino, Mangione & Steady, P.A.** – 30,000 square feet of law offices and 2,000 square feet of retail. According to the Tampa Heights Neighborhood News, the “park in front of the building will be renovated and upgraded”

  [Tampa Heights Neighborhood News 2(1)]

In April 2003, Ralph Schuler, then president of the Tampa Heights Civic Association, spoke about all of these economic changes: “We’re excited to see that property turn into something productive and no longer a haven for people to hang out in… This is bringing back urban to the urban core. Right now it’s just wasteland” (Girona 2003: 1).

It will be interesting to see whether these redevelopment plans will ultimately lead to increased social and economic diversification, or whether the plans will lead to the displacement of current residents of Tampa Heights. Public housing complexes have already been torn down all over the city. Residents of Robles Park Village, a public housing complex, are fighting to not only stay in the community, but also to become owners of their residences (Behnken 2002; Karp 2002). When residents were putting together the Tampa Heights Neighborhood Plan, they originally are said to have included demolition of the housing complexes as a goal.
When the residents of public housing heard about the plan to demolish their buildings, they not only spoke up against their displacement, but also voiced their wish for ownership of their homes. As one resident says, “‘We want to be homeowners… I believe it gives people a permanent stake and a direct investment’” (Karp 2002). The Tampa Heights Citizen Advisory Committee revised their plan, including in the plan the goal of having residents of public housing become homeowners into the Tampa Heights Plan. This plan has been accepted by the Tampa Heights Community and the Tampa City Council.

The Tampa Heights Neighborhood Plan appears to rest upon the concept of place attachment. Suggestions for improving the social fabric of Tampa Heights rely on the idea that residents feel connected to the community, as if they have a “permanent stake.” This connectedness can be promoted by the fostering of a unique culture in Tampa Heights. People who have helped to create changes in the neighborhood are more likely to feel a sense of connectedness in a neighborhood versus those who have not. This connection may be solidified by economic ownership in property.

Generally speaking, it is possible that residents who push for outside investments and applaud politicians when they speak of progress being made to their neighborhoods may later be ejected from their houses when change finally occurs. It is possible, however, for this not to be a “zero-sum” game. There are models for change that residents can look to for guidance. In Massachusetts, a group of residents (the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative) decided to reform their neighborhood and were even able to obtain the power of eminent domain (Medoff 1995). They actively guided their neighborhood’s destiny, and took ownership over their neighborhood.
Politicians, investors, youth residents, and adult residents and all see the area in different ways. The image of Tampa Heights is changing from a place perceived as dangerous to an area with great promise.

Residents’ Impressions of Tampa Heights

_The Documentation of Daily Life in Tampa Heights_ is a collection of interviews with residents of Tampa Heights. A USF Communications class interviewed adults and youth who lived in Tampa Heights. Most of the children who were interviewed were members of the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association. These children then helped the USF college students to conduct interviews with adults in the neighborhood. The Documentation of Daily Life in Tampa Heights contains perspectives on Tampa Heights from various groups in the neighborhood. One resident, who also owns real estate in the area, states that people originally thought he was “crazy” for wanting to live in the neighborhood, but now it is perceived as a “hot spot” full of “potential.” As will be discussed later, many businesses are investing in Tampa Heights.

As more and more people see the potential in Tampa Heights, it is becoming harder and harder for people to “buy low and sell high.” Whereas Eddie Serralles, a real estate investor, once “bought tons of property for $10,000 a piece then fixed them up and sold the for $100,000,” now it is becoming harder to make a profit. Serralles says that years ago he “made out like a bandit,” but “everybody knows about it now so it is a tougher market.” He states that “Tampa Heights is growing. This is a great place for investment!” At the same time that Tampa Heights is touted as a good place to invest, Serralles takes aim at the people in Tampa Heights. When asked “what is lacking in
Tampa Heights?” Serralles states that “Realistically, let’s start with the basics. People around here walk to the grocery stores. This is not Hyde Park. This is the ghetto. We have ghetto grocery stores, ghetto restaurants, and ghetto gas stations. That’s what you have here. It would be nice to uplift it but it can’t be done right now. These people are depressed.” It seems that Serralles’ statement may be typical of real estate and other business investors. The area is seen as having a lot of potential, once the “people factor” is ignored.

Youth ideas about the neighborhood appear not to be influenced by real estate speculators’ ideas of the neighborhood’s potential. One young woman, when asked to “sum up Tampa Heights,” said: “Okay, neighborhood full of violence… YMCA go there chill, school, play football on the field, hang out walk the street.” When asked “Is Tampa Heights a good neighborhood,” however, she said, “Sometimes, everybody like to get together.” Other youth also stated that “the block parties” are what they like most about the neighborhood. Most of the youth said that “the violence” and “drugs” were the worst part of living in Tampa Heights. They report a lot of “stolen cars, car chases, people getting shot, or whatever.”

Several youth reported that the police did not make them feel safer but, in fact, harassed them. One young lady stated in response to “How helpful are the police in helping to take care of the problems in Tampa Heights”: “They are not real helpful. One night I was sitting outside talking to my friend and a police came by and he just sat there and shined a light in our face and we asked him why he did that and he said he had nothing else to do and he just stayed there with the light in our face.” Police harassment was mentioned by a few of the young males in the neighborhood, as well. Perez writes
that often, minorities who live in a neighborhood which is starting to gentrify may notice that police are harassing them more frequently than usual. This is a strategy that upholds gentrification. Perez writes, “Law enforcement is a key component in gentrification processes… Increased policing of young men and women of color is one way to sanitize public space…” (Perez 2002: 68). Thus police intimidation serves as one way to keep minority youth under control and out of the sight of middle class, often white, newcomers. In this way, law enforcement supports gentrification (Smith 1996; Dikec 2002).

According to the interviews for The Documentation of Daily Life in Tampa Heights, participation in the YMCA and the Tampa Heights Civic Association were the bright spots of many of the youth respondents lives. One youth credited the Tampa Heights Civic Association’s former director, Pam Glas, with helping him focus on school: “I had to get my mind on track and I started coming to Ms. Pam’s.” When asked the best part about living in Tampa Heights, the young man responded: “They have so many opportunities when people come through like different clubs, church programs. People give us opportunity and they ask questions like you ask.” Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association youth reported that their meetings at the YMCA acted as their main social outlet.

Adult residents tended to show some concern with improving the situation for youth of Tampa Heights. They largely saw the youth as “not bad kids” who are “bored” and “need more constructive things.” They stated that the Junior Civic Association and the YMCA were positive parts of Tampa Heights. One adult answered that “the best area or place in the community” was “Pam’s program, it’s a place for the kids to hang out and
keep them from doing other things. They can’t make it (community) better without kids themselves. They’re never going to get the kids help by treating as common criminals… I know they (police) do. I’ve seen it, they’ve done it to my son and he’s an honor roll student.”

Adult residents of Tampa Heights tended to state that Tampa Heights is a “good area” overall, although “there are drugs in the area.” One parent of a Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association member stated, “For the most part I don’t have a problem with my kids playing outside during the day, but once the sun goes down and all the people come out of the bushes it’s time to lock the doors.” The residents who have been in Tampa Heights for years have seen what they describe as positive changes in Tampa Heights change in Tampa Heights. One resident stated there had been “Major changes! When I moved here it was not pleasant to say the least. There was broken glass on the streets and it was dirty… now it’s much better. There are changes everyday.” However, some residents stated that the changes in Tampa Heights often were accompanied by negative consequences for poorer residents and the diversity of the community. One resident stated of the Mayor’s Heights Project, a project initiated under former mayor Dick Greco, “I believe that when he gets done and the people who have lived here all their lives will be out and it is not going to be the same. So therefore it might help the city look better but I don’t think it is going to help the people in Tampa Heights.” The Mayor’s Heights Project is no longer in effect, but the gentrification the resident mentions is still occurring.

The Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative falls into the category of improvements designed to make the city look better. The Greenprinting Initiative is not
part of the Mayor’s Heights Project, which ended with Greco’s administration, but it does fall into Mayor Pam Iorio’s focus on neighborhoods. It is within this context of change that the Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative occurs. The MBP has hoped that park revitalization will not only beautify the neighborhood but also be a route to community building, as is reflected in their motto ‘Together we’re growing a community’.

Below I will describe the parks in more detail.

Tampa Heights’ Parks

The Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative is the second initiative of its type attempted in Tampa. The previous initiative was in Seminole Heights. One of the ways that the Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative is different from the Seminole Heights Greenprinting Initiative is that in Seminole Heights, residents had only one park available to renovate, whereas in Tampa Heights there were four parks available. There are actually seven parks in the Tampa Heights neighborhood, but three of the parks had already received improvements or the promise of improvements. When the director of the Mayor’s Beautification Program that sponsors the Greenprinting Initiative came in to talk to the residents about the process, she assumed that there would be one park from the beginning. According to Lena Young Green, The Tampa Heights Civic Association did want all of the residents to decide on the park. They feared that selecting one park from the beginning was bound to promote divisiveness. Therefore, they negotiated with the Mayor’s Beautification Program to include a process for residents to choose one park out of the four parks in Tampa Heights.
Young Green states, “Because we knew how diverse our community is, because many of us at the table had represented our community for several years, so we knew how hard we had worked over the years not to split us apart. We insisted – we insisted that one park should not be selected over the other, that a process should be put in place for prioritizing the parks as opposed to selecting one park.”

The parks residents had to choose from in the beginning phase of this Initiative are all about a mile apart from one to another, with the largest distance between Morgan Street and Calvin Taylor. Even the distance between these parks is only 1.35 miles. All of the parks are also very close to the Tampa Metropolitan YMCA, a focal point of the neighborhood. However, the area is not set up for pedestrians. According to an employee for City of Tampa’s Parks and Recreation, there are plans to link the parks by a Greenway, so that people can walk from one park to another.

Below (figure 2) is a map showing the locations of the 4 parks:
Figure 2: Park Locations

Block Captains’ Roles and Responsibilities: One-year commitment – if unable to commit to one year, must find replacement. Block Captains will distribute information (flyers and Newsletter) to neighborhood residents six times/year (every other month). Average area of distribution: 50 houses.
**Calvin Taylor Playground:**

Basketball is a main activity. There is also a jungle gym, swings, and a hopscotch diagram. During the weekdays, children hang out at the park after school, either playing on the field or sitting at a picnic table and talking with the sole staff member at the park. She says that there definitely need to be more staff members. Youth play softball every night. Park-goers complained that locked bathrooms present a problem during softball games.

**Morgan Street Park:**

Morgan Street Park is the smallest park of the 4. The sign in front of the park reads “Morgan Street Mini Park -- City of Tampa Parks Department”. This is the only park of the four that has a sign. Children sometimes play on the jungle gym or play informally. This park appears to be empty a lot of the time. The undergraduates who did some of the park observations during Tuesday and Thursday afternoons never once saw anybody at this park. One year, this park was used as the starting point for the Tampa Heights Civic Association’s Annual Tour of Homes.

**Plymouth Playground:**

Plymouth is very close to Calvin Taylor Park. They are basically separated by a cemetery. There are 2 baseball fields and a basketball court. Baseball is a major activity. On one Sunday afternoon, I saw three children around the age of 10 tossing around a football on a basketball court, one child on a jungle gym with her parents, one man sleeping on a bench, and two kids riding through the park on their bikes.
Robles Park

Robles Park is the largest park of the 4. It has a unique look, a unique history, and the highest attendance of the four parks. The main feature is the large pond in the middle of the park. The pond has a frequently used walking path around it. There is a basketball court and a lot of open space. Adults, teens and children used the park for walking, tag football, and occasionally fishing and nature-watching.

History of Tampa Parks

The first park in Tampa was Plant Park. This park was not one of the parks from which residents had to choose in this project. Plant Park is located downtown on the site of the former Tampa Bay Hotel. This park was created after the owner of the Tampa Bay Hotel (Henry Bradley Plant) passed away and “civic leaders” negotiated with his heirs for the property to be sold to the city. The property was in the city’s possession by 1905.

Mayor Robert Chauncy took parks as a priority when he came into office in 1931. On his first day as Mayor, he asked the former park superintendent for his resignation and appointed Marco Penn, a horticulturalist and landscape designer as the park superintendent. Garden Clubs were very active in the creation and renovation of parks. Bingham writes, “The Garden Circles are very interested in the beautification of our city. They have chosen vacant plots in their areas as their Civic Projects” (1963:27). The garden clubs often started beautification projects and then contacted the Parks Department for needed materials and manpower, ranging from flowers and plants to water systems (Bingham 1963). Thus, civic clubs have always been active in park beautification projects.
Of the 4 parks from which the residents chose (Morgan Street Park, Robles Park, Calvin Taylor Playground, and Plymouth Park), Robles Park and Plymouth Park were the only parks for which I could find history. Plymouth Park was added to the city during Mayor Nuccio’s administration. Robles Park, became similar to how it is today in the 1930s.

Until 1928 Robles Park was known as Adams Park. It was at one time a swamp. Anna Mae Bingham, a president of the Tampa Federation of Garden Club Circles, writes that by 1931, “Robles Swamp had been filled with some dirt, but left in large mounds all over the area” (Bingham 1963: 6). In 1931, the City of Tampa Park Department smoothed out the dirt and left a pond in the center of the park (Bingham 1963: 6). According to the Tampa Heights Historic Site, at the time of the 1931 improvement, the park was already a “popular recreation facility” named Robles Pond (Bingham 1963: 24).

It is not clear when the auditorium began to be used for “community affairs and social gatherings,” but it may have been around the time when the Park Department started on its second wave of renovations. During Mayor Nuccio’s administration, the Park Department removed the hyacinths from the pond and built an island in the center of the lake “as a sanctuary for the ducks and swans” (Bingham 1963: 14). Two swans were donated to the Parks Department for Robles Park by Tom Spicola, Jr. Bingham writes that at this time a “sump pump” was placed in the middle of the pond in order to control the flooding that occurred in times of heavy rains (Bingham 1963: 14). Bingham writes that the pump was supposed to prevent the park from flooding. One current Civic Association member who lives in the Robles area told me that the pond’s retention
As stated in the literature review, African Americans were the first to live in the Robles Pond area (Muse 1936: 7). In the late 1940s, the 3-4 block area that comprised Robles Park was inhabited by many Black families and a few Whites (Saunders n.d.: 4). According to Saunders, the City of Tampa tried to use urban renewal as a guise to condemn the property of black Homeowners in the Robles Park area so that they could replace it with housing for White residents. The Tampa NAACP and the Urban League called for the Mayor to replace the Scrub with low-income housing for black residents, instead of condemning and taking the decently maintained homes of Black residents in the Robles Park area (Saunders n.d.: 3). Saunders (n.d.:4) writes, “This group [of Black homeowners in the 3-4 block Robles Park area] protested the building of a three million dollar project to be constructed for white occupancy on the land they were being forced to vacate.”. It is not clear from Saunders’ paper whether the resolution was successful. He writes that he used the story as an example of how “some prominent white Tampans were espousing better housing, although racially segregated conditions, for the city’s Black citizens” (Saunders n.d.:4).

Currently the area surrounding Robles Park is inhabited mainly by Black residents. There are plenty of houses owned by Black families around the park. Some of the older residents have been there since at least the 1960s. Towards the north of the park there is a public housing complex known as Robles Park Village. The housing is mainly inhabited by Black residents and some Latinos. One may wonder whether the renovation of Robles Park, which is being funded predominately by a “prominent white Tampan,”
may some day end in economic and/or ethnic segregation. This is not to say that the
foundation which funded the project intended on changing the concentration of the area,
however, since the residents voted for Robles Park. I write this history in order to bring
attention to the sensitive issues with which the MBP and the Greenprinting Committee
might eventually be faced.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

I have reviewed documents directly grounded in the community, as well as more theoretical literature concerning parks and politics. The *Tampa Heights Plan: Rebuilding Community, The Documentation of Daily Life in Tampa Heights*, and various newspaper sources serve as the basis of my literature review. I will also discuss theoretical literature related to social capital, neighborhood revitalization, gentrification, and parks as sites for political conflict.

Community Building and Social Capital

The Tampa Heights Plan writers aim to rebuild their community by addressing “economic opportunity and security”; “adequate physical development and infrastructure”; “safety and security”; “well functioning institutions and services”; and promoting the development of “social capital.” Of these, the promotion of social capital is most obviously connected to the process of park renovation. To the Tampa Heights community, which adopted the plan on Nov. 12, 2002, increased social capital amounts to “promoting a rich social fabric and strong community voice” (*Tampa Heights Citizen Advisory Committee* 2002: 1).

Implicit in the plan is the concept that the “Tampa Heights Community” refers to individuals who reside in Tampa Heights, not just a spatial location. The betterment of the “community” implies that the current residents will benefit from the positive changes
they bring about in the cultural and the economic conditions of their environment.

Improved community is something that one can feel as well as see.

Several suggestions of the Tampa Heights plan involve strengthening the cultural identity of Tampa Heights in order to make the community a more attractive place for residents as well as investors. One suggestion of the Tampa Heights plan is to have “commercial streets define the image of the neighborhood,” as “a neighborhood’s image impacts its ability to attract customers, new businesses and the support of government programs” (9). Tampa Heights community members, especially those in the Tampa Heights Civic Association, are working to decrease the image of Tampa Heights as a violent, poverty-filled neighborhood, and promote the image of Tampa Heights as a historic community on the rise.

The “commercial revitalization effort” involves changes to Florida, Nebraska, and Tampa Avenues, including making Tampa and Florida Avenue two-way streets (9). This vision calls for local merchants and other “neighborhood-based players” to “build upon whatever assets exist within the community” (9). They are hoping to pool together their assets and promote a type of revitalization that is based very strongly in the neighborhood, rather than being imposed by or dependent upon the outside. This type of revitalization is more reliant on social capital than economic capital. One might even say that they plan to promote social capital into economic capital, instead of letting economic motivations be the force that changes their neighborhood. Residents believe that by working together, they can make Tampa Heights a place where they will enjoy living.

The Tampa Heights Plan: Rebuilding Community “recommends starting with a complete inventory of community assets” (1). They draw upon Kretzmann and McKnight’s
popular notion that asset mapping is a strategy that community members can use to organize their assets, thereby increasing their capacity for change. The focus in asset mapping is on the assets of the community first and foremost, not the deficiencies of the community, as in needs assessments. Asset mapping fits in very well with the Greenprinting Initiative, as we will see later.

A major assumption in some social policies is that economically richer neighborhoods necessarily have high social capital (Logan 2003, Atkins 2003). Some policy makers and theorists use the supposed deficiency of social capital (or, perhaps, the prevalence of types of social capital that they consider to be negative) as a reason to move people away from their neighborhoods and into neighborhoods that have a supposedly better structure. Lang writes that social capital is not always associated with income. Affluent people can, in fact, afford not to have social ties, whereas for impoverished people, social capital may be the one thing keeping them from homelessness (Lang 1998:5). Logan (2003), Atkins (2003), and Kennedy et al (1998) write that economically impoverished neighborhoods have low social capital resources. However, this generalization may be faulty.

Logan, following the work of Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay, describes bad neighborhoods as places that are basically deficient in social capital. He writes, “Regardless of who lives in a particular locality… some neighborhoods consistently lacked the institutions needed to control the behavior of local youth, such as trust among neighbors, intact families and recreational activities for children” (Logan 2003: 35). Logan explains that this lack of institutions is mediated by government policy. Based on Logan’s argument, the clear solution would seem to be to work to increase social capital
in the neighborhood. If governments wanted to assist in this process, they could do so by putting money into youth organizations and community programs. Later I will discuss youth programs as institutions where social capital can be fostered between members.

Community building seems more efficient and less tumultuous than displacing residents through Moving to Opportunity and other programs that seek to move residents to places where there is supposedly better social capital. Residents who can stay in their neighborhoods and also increase the social capital throughout the neighborhood, through establishing informal and formal networks, can benefit themselves and their neighborhoods without having to undergo the economic and emotional assault of being uprooted (Hose 2001: 18-21; Magdol 2002).

Social capital can be defined in a simplistic sense as social connections. People connect with each other in an attempt to make life easier. Robert Putnam (1995) writes that social capital involves civic engagement and trust. Social capital can be found in associations, clubs, support groups, professional groups, and even bowling leagues. Putnam believes that social capital is deteriorating in our society, to the detriment of all of us. In Bowling Alone, he uses the example of the increasingly more common phenomenon of individuals bowling by themselves rather than in leagues as illustrative of the larger American trend of social disengagement. He writes that this social disengagement leads to alienation of individuals. Putnam even ties rising suicide rates to a lack of social capital.

According to James Coleman (1988), norms and obligations are important mechanisms in the application of social capital. In order for norms to exist, all members in a circle must have a relationship with each other. Members of a circle where social
capital is shared can indirectly control the behavior of other members. Coleman defines norms as “a set of effective sanctions that can monitor and guide behavior” (1988: S107). These norms make it easier for people to do business with each other or simply co-exist more easily. For example, “Effective norms that inhibit crime make it possible to walk freely outside at night in a city and enable old persons to leave their houses without fear for their safety” (Coleman 1988: S104). Temkin and Rohe (1998) use “political activity, neighborhood loyalty and attachment, and whether the neighborhood is a good place to live” as a way to measure social capital for statistical analysis (1998: 81). They decide that public, nonprofit, or community civic organizations should build social capital as a way to “stem neighborhood decline” (Temkin and Rohe 1998: 62).

Strengthening social capital contributes to at least the perception of lower crime rates, if not the reality (Merry 1996; Kennedy et. al 1998). When people know their neighbors and have a familiarity with their neighborhood, they know which people they need to watch out for and what places are not safe to go. Thus, they will be less likely to have a generalized overwhelming sense of fear. The more integrated a person is in the social networks of the community, the less they feel they have to fear. This theory may explain why one youth interviewed in *The Documentation of Daily Life in Tampa Heights* stated that although drug dealing was a problem, she was not personally bothered by it because she knew many of the drug dealers and even teased some of them when she walked by them. Coleman (1987) suggests that when neighbors have a strong social capital network, they can more easily exert more influence on those who might cause crime. Not surprisingly, Cook, Bruin and Crull write that “the social capital available to

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residents of urban neighborhoods appears to contribute to housing quality and lower crime rates” (Cook et al. 2000: 189).

Income inequality may also breed low social capital and violent crimes. Putnam (2000) and Kennedy (1998) both point out the correlation between low social capital and income inequality. The absence of other forms of capital seems to give a reason and an opportunity for the proliferation of gangs, mobs, and the like (Putnam 2000: 315).

Ginwright and James, drawing on research done by Brooks-Gunn and James Garbarino, write about the “ecological context” that may make youth feel that they have no other outlet to make money (Ginwright et al 2002, see also Vigil 1993). They write that “racism, mass unemployment, pervasive violence, and police brutality” make up the “ecological context” of youths’ lives. Youth may turn to gangs and drugs in the hope of money and protection. Gangs provide a (dangerous) type of social capital, which some youth draw upon in the presumable absence of more empowering forms of social capital, such as youth programs.

McLaughlin and Heath (1994) note that in “tough” neighborhoods, youth who were known to be active in youth organizations were not harassed as much by gangs as youth who were not affiliated with any group (McLaughlin 1994). Youth in impoverished neighborhoods are also much less likely to be civically-minded than their counterparts in more affluent areas (Atkins and Hart 2003). Atkins and Hart are unclear of what mechanisms prohibit the formulation of civic identity in youth, but they propose that poor neighborhoods may not be able to as easily sustain “neighborhood institutions” (Atkins and Hart 2003, 2002). Relating this theory specifically to Tampa Heights, several Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association members interviewed for the
Documentation of Daily Life in Tampa Heights noted that they felt the need to stay away from the bad influences in the neighborhood. They believed that the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association helped them do so.

Unfortunately, the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association, the only neighborhood-based youth organization in Tampa Heights, is facing difficulty finding funds for next year. Much of the reason behind this grim possibility is that the Children’s Board of Hillsborough County, which used to fund the youth organization, has decided that they no longer want to fund programs for children over the age of 8 years old. In their 2012 Plan, they cite research which has convinced them that they can get more results from using their resources on children under 8 years of age (Zigler and Hall 2000; Daniel 2000; Lloyd 1978). In this plan, they paint a picture of hopelessness for children who are having problems by the time they are eight years old. They do not focus on the many examples of youth who are able to “rebound” during their middle school or teenage years. They do not focus either on the possibility of youth themselves helping to bring about positive changes in communities. Teenagers are often able to actively contribute to their communities in a way that 7 year olds cannot.

In the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association, youth are treated as not only people who can benefit from the program, but people who can enrich the community. The Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association is a huge asset to the community. They are willing volunteers for many projects, such as the Tour of Homes, and the Civic Association members and other residents hope that these youth can become leaders who turn their community around.
Utilizing youth as assets for community development is also seen in the neighborhood revitalization process recounted in Medoff’s (1994) *Streets of Hope*. Youth participated in neighborhood clean-ups, painted murals, created architectural models for proposed community centers, and even held positions in the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative board (Medoff 1994, Breitbart 1998:305-327).

The lesson seems to be that positive, affirmative social capital may offer an alternative to, or even shield people from, engaging in criminal and violent actions. Even more than that, positive social connections can lead to the revitalization of neighborhoods.

**How to Revitalize a Neighborhood: Competing Ideas**

Resident-driven empowerment challenges the global trend of “revitalizing” (or “regenerating,” as it is called in Europe) neighborhoods through gentrification. Gentrification is the process of increasing the city’s cash flow through bringing in investors, recruiting a new crop of more affluent residents, and displacing current residents, not always in that order (Smith 2002; Marcuse and Kempen 2000).

The route to gentrification may start with beautification and urban renewal strategies. “Gentrification is a powerful, if often camouflaged, intent within urban regeneration strategies,” Smith writes (446). Though the physical neighborhood may become more economically prosperous, the former residents do not get to enjoy the neighborhood when the physical space (which differs from community) is revitalized through their displacement. As a neighborhood starts gaining value, the previous residents may no longer be able to afford to live there, so they may have to move to less valuable areas, freeing up their property for richer people. Or, gentrification can happen
in a more direct way. Cities can force residents to move off their land, especially if they happen to be public housing residents. Housing complexes which are earmarked for bulldozing often happen to be in areas that are otherwise gentrified already, implying that HOPE VI and policies like it have the hidden agenda of being used to complete gentrification of a community so that the city can bring in more investors, affluent residents, and economic capital (Smith 2002).

Cities sometimes claim to be doing right by residents by demolishing their residences and moving them out, under the pretense of moving them to better places. The theory that impoverished individuals benefit from being moved from their environment to new places seems to be heavily influenced by earlier and current “culture of poverty” arguments (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2003; Jargowsky 1997: 18; Wilson 1987; Lewis 1965 Rosenbaum 2001

Proponents of the “culture of poverty” theory believe that the concentration of poor individuals leads to a culture where people stay mired in their poverty and reproduce the same mindset for continuous generations. One obvious example of this type of thinking is spouted by a Miami architect, Andres Duany, who writes, “Gentrification is usually good news, for there is nothing more unhealthy for a city than a monoculture of poverty” (Duany 2001: 36). In support of his assertion, Duany (2001: 36) quotes the “African American police chief of Charleston, South Carolina,” who says “‘Urban problems are caused not by poverty, but by the concentration of poverty.’” One may have thought that this idea was defeated years ago, but sociologists, anthropologists, and others still find themselves refuting this ideology (Ritzdorf 2000: 170-171; Goode and Eames 1996). Many of the “culture of poverty” type arguments are very superficial.
They do not look into root causes for poverty, but instead blame people, focusing on their negative practices or “bad” belief systems.

The Moving to Opportunity (MTO) experiment has been used to lend support to this ideology. Some research has shown that children who are moved out of economically depressed and crime-ridden neighborhoods have shown educational gains (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2003; Rosenbaum 2001). However, these studies have some flaws. One flaw is the question of generalizability. In the Chicago Gautreux experiment, for instance, people not only voluntarily moved, but were also incredibly optimistic about their ability to adjust to higher income, possibly largely white neighborhoods. In this study 77.5% of mothers felt “good or very good about sending their children to schools where more than half of the other students are White” (Rosenbaum and Harris 2001: 190). 74.8% were “sure or very sure that they would like living in a neighborhood with people who earned more than they did” (Rosenbaum and Harris 2001: 190). They also liked the prospect of separating their youth from negative influences. The eagerness of the experimental group to move may indicate that the mothers who opted to move either did not have strong ties in their neighborhoods and/or they were not happy with the type of social capital available in their neighborhood. Most did not think their neighbors were positive influences (especially on their children).

Moving to Opportunity proponents such as Rosenbaum et al (2001) sometimes note that there are some difficulties involved after people move, such as difficulty in access to transportation, but state that these difficulties can be straightened out with more housing counseling. One question is whether this is still yet another way to move the
poor around in hopes that there conditions will get better. Furthermore, if the changes for movers are positive, what then happens to those who stay in economically depressed and/or crime-ridden neighborhoods?

Some sociologists say that policy decisions, more so than people, create bad neighborhoods (Logan 2003). Logan (2003) notes some of the complexities involved with neighborhood revitalization. He explores the concept of “bad neighborhoods,” focusing on bad neighborhoods as places created by policy decisions made outside of the neighborhoods, rather than viewing “bad neighborhoods” as places where “bad people” reside. Logan explains that “public policies often accelerate a neighborhood’s downward spiral, and areas with sufficient political clout protect themselves at the expense of poorer neighborhoods” (Logan 2003: 33). The government’s investment in certain neighborhoods over others leads to deteriorating housing quality, among other things, and those who can afford to leave, do (Logan 2003; Smith 1996). Logan (2003: 37) notes the connection between public health, policy, and disinvestment. Where housing and health services are suffering from disinvestment, and residents live in “noxious environments,” they may have higher stress, which leads to more “aggression.” Anderton (1994) writes of the practice of locating dumps, incinerators and the like in poorer, often minority neighborhoods.

Economically impoverished residents sometimes pay the price for government policies by being uprooted. The more direct solution would be to place money into institutions that allow social capital to flourish in poor neighborhoods. However, moving people to other areas is offered as a quick fix. There is also the issue that perhaps this ideology makes for an excuse or supposed reason to dismantle housing projects.
Rosenbaum et. al (2001) mention that Moving to Opportunity programs may be even more well utilized because of the dismantling of public housing. One may wonder whether the two work together, one “justifying” the other.

Rosenbaum et. al (2001: 193), drawing on Sampson (1999), note that neighborhoods from which people were moved “featured very low levels of social control” and “low levels of collective efficacy surrounded by similar neighborhoods.” This low level of social organization in poorer neighborhoods is also mentioned by Logan (2003), in defense against moving to opportunity arguments. Rosenbaum and Harris (2001: 192) even refer to Coleman (1988), writing of his finding that “neighborhoods with a high degree of social organization also feature a high degree of social capital.” One may wonder if Coleman meant for his work to be used in this way. They also take Anderson (1990) out of context, writing that “the devastating impact of neighborhood decline on areal social organization has been described in a number of ethnographic studies, most notably Anderson’s (1990) Streetwise” (Rosenbaum 2001: 191). Poor neighborhoods have low social capital, according to Rosenbaum and Harris, because “the structural features of disadvantage (e.g., poverty and residential instability) break down the kinds of relationships between neighbors that comprise social organization and inhibit the formation of new ones” (Rosenbaum 2001: 191). Rosenbaum et. al (2001) speak of residential instability, which Logan (2003) agrees inspires low levels of social organization, but in proposing more moves they are proposing shaking up the level of residential instability even more. They are perhaps even creating residential instability in receiving neighborhoods.
Although it is doubtful that Rosenbaum and Harris’ work presents the strongest argument by Moving to Opportunity advocates, I wish to draw attention to the way that they and policy makers bend the idea of social capital for their own purposes. If “neighborhoods with a high degree of social organization also feature a high degree of social capital” (Rosenbaum et al 2001: 192), why not then work to increase the social organization and social capital in poor neighborhoods, possibly by solving problems that lead to social disorganization (such as unemployment, socioeconomic composition, family composition, and residential stability) instead of offering to move impoverished people to neighborhoods which are supposedly more organized? Also, it seems that social disorganization theory would contradict the idea that poor people should move to new neighborhoods. Residential stability influences the level of social organization, yet moving people automatically makes for residential instability. By adding new residents to the neighborhood, they are disrupting the social capital that has already been established in the neighborhood.

Their assumption, it seems, is that the receiving neighborhoods would assimilate the new neighbors. However, residents of former neighborhoods may possibly be resistant to new neighbors, which may lead to either they or the new neighbors moving out. The strength of the existing social organization may make it easier for the previous residents to push out the new residents through various means, such as exerting pressure on the government to impose code restrictions. At the very least, it cannot be taken for granted that the newcomers will easily assimilate into the social networks of their community. Middle Class Blacks who move to the suburbs sometimes are noticeably ignored by their White neighbors (Hatchet 1995). It is likely that the situation will be
even worse for impoverished people, especially minorities, who are thought to bring
down the value of others’ properties by their very presence.

There is the question of ulterior motives as well. Is the Moving to Opportunity
ideology just designed to make it easier for people to accept that people are being
dislocated from their environments? Could it be that the moving to opportunity masks
ulterior motives that a city may have to get the poor out of their neighborhood to free up
the land or otherwise presumably “improve” the economic value of their neighborhoods.
It is not clear (to me) whether the ideology behind MTO experiments is truly intended to
mask the ugliness of displacing people for a city’s economic benefit. It could be that the
idea started off hopefully, but has been appropriated to support displacement of people.
The ideology that it does poor people some good to relocate them is strongly associated
with the idea that neighborhoods can be revitalized by infusing them with middle class
residents. This idea is referred to by the term gentrification.

How Gentrification Works

Gentrification is a term coined by Ruth Glass in 1964. She used the term to refer
to the pattern where middle class people, or ‘gentry,’ were displacing poorer residents in
Inner London. This term is metaphoric and not value neutral (Smith 1996; Hamnett 2003;
Perez 2002). As Gina Perez argues, “the notion of ‘value-free development’ is largely a
fantasy. Local growth is fundamentally about the social construction of place and
attempts to enhance exchange over use value in ways that sacrifice the majority and
reward the few” (Perez 2002: 37). By the 1980s, gentrification began to be known
around the world as a process of transition occurring in urban cities (Smith 1996; Smith
Some argue that gentrification is now not only an urban phenomenon but a rural one as well (Phillips 2004).

There are various theories regarding how gentrification works. Hamnett (2003) names 3 different arguments, while Redfern (2003) and Smith (1996) refer to two. Lees writes about this discussion, proposing that scholarly writers move away from concentrating so much on these distinctions.

One school of thought says that gentrification is a consequence of a shift from industrial to postindustrial economy, with an emphasis on service rather than manufacture of items (Hamnett 1994). The second school of thought, which is thought by Hamnett (2003) to be related to the shift from industrial to postindustrial economy (see also Wilson 1996), holds that cultural demands shape gentrification (Ley 1980; Redfern 2003). The last explanation, which Hamnett (2003) differentiates from the other two, is the rent gap theory. Smith (1996; 2002) is best known for the rent gap theory.

Smith’s (1996) summary of the arguments is more straightforward than Hamnett’s (2003). Smith (1996) characterizes the academic discussion over gentrification into two sides: consumption side arguments and production side arguments. Consumption side arguments are more concerned with effects, whereas production side arguments are concerned with causes. Consumption side arguments concern “who moves in and who moves out” (Smith 1996:41). Consumption side arguments therefore pay attention to culture and the choices of individual actors. Production side arguments, meanwhile, speak to how larger economic processes, like “capital disinvestment,” shape gentrification (Smith 1996:41). Smith favors production side explanations, such as capital disinvestment and the rent gap theory. The rent gap theory basically states that if a
property is worth more than what renters are paying for it, this produces a rent gap. Owners could be benefiting more from getting more money for the property. Thus, they find out a way to enter into business transactions with more affluent residents.

Properties originally lose their value through capital disinvestment (Smith 1996). Thus, a property can decrease greatly in value, and later be worth much more. Smith (1996) does not discard consumption side explanations. He instead locates cultural preferences and individual agency within the wider context of economic processes. Thus, “the complexity of capital mobility in and out of the built environment lies at the core of the process” of gentrification (Smith 1996: 51).

Redfern (2003) discusses supply and demand, which seem to be the same as production and consumption. Redfern’s (2003) focus on why people chose to gentrify (demand) would fall within Smith’s (1996) consumption-side category. His main focus is to reassert the agency of individual actors. He decides that gentrifiers, like those they displace, have a concern over “identity and status” (Smith 2003: 2364). The supply of new housing offers them a way to resolve this concern, albeit at the expense of those they displace.

Redfern (2003) notes that Lees (2000) attempts to “transcend” supply and demand arguments. Lees (2000: 391) summarizes earlier discussions, explaining that “a focus on supply versus demand, mapped on top of economic versus culture and/or production versus consumption, has been one of the mainstays of the gentrification literature.” She writes that these arguments have come to a stagnant point, and proposes a look at Ley’s “geographies of gentrification” concept. Lees also comments upon Smith’s (1996) discussion of gentrification. According to Lees, “by representing middle-class gentrifiers
as inadvertent instruments of abstract economic forces, Smith unintentionally absolves them of any responsibility for their actions” (Lees 2000: 399). She acknowledges that “investment flows” make gentrification possible, but she also asserts that the desires of middle class gentrifiers take precedence over the rights and desires of poorer individuals. Lees, like Redfern (2003), places individual agency back into the argument.

David Ley (2003) considers individual agency as well, focusing particularly on artists as gentrifiers. It is no coincidence to Ley that gentrification started around the same decade when there came to be an abundance of baby-boomer artistic types looking for places to rent. Ley’s (2003) discussion is heavily grounded in Bourdieu’s discussion of economic versus cultural capital. Bourdieu’s (1984) continuum places artists with high cultural capital and low capital at one extreme and commercial employers, with low cultural capital but high economic capital, lie at the other extreme. Artists, because they do not have much money but are looking for a permissive, noncommercial space, are drawn to inner cities (Ley 2003). They write that these socially diverse neighborhoods, where impoverished people live as well, “can be valorized as authentic, symbolically rich, and free from the commodification that depreciates the meaning of place” (Ley 2003: 2535). Yet, by their residence in the area, they increase the value of the space, which eventually leads to the place’s commodification by businesses. Ley (2003: 2540) writes that “in an historic context where cultural capital has enjoyed high symbolic value, an economic valorization of the aesthetic disposition has frequently led to an increase in property prices.” Eventually, artists are displaced to cheaper districts, by the increased rent and/or increasingly commercial feel of the area. Other professionals, who are a little further along the scale, but also having lower economic than cultural capital, move into
the neighborhood. In time, the area is gentrified. Ley cautions us, however, not to blame the artist for the gentrification they cause, since it was not their intention to open the way for commercial investors and full-scale gentrification. Instead, “it is the societal valorization of the cultural competencies of the artist which brings followers richer in economic capital” (Ley 2003: 2541). Thus, artists, in trying to create their own space, put value back into devalued areas, opening the way for new investors and their own eventual displacement.

Ley’s (2003) framework somewhat applies to the situation in Tampa Heights, where old, dilapidated buildings have been renovated as affordable lofts or office space (Cronan 2003; Thompson 2002). One building, The Sanctuary, was renovated by a husband-wife architecture team. The Sanctuary, now an apartment building, stands out since it used to be a church and has beautiful stained glass windows (Thompson 2002). The architects who redesigned The Sanctuary had to seek out private investors (Thompson 2002). However, more and more, space for gentrifiers is being created by businesses that specialize in restoring old property. So, although it may be that artists and artist-types play a role in gentrification, they seem to act within a political-economic system where Tampa Heights is a city-designated target for revitalization.

Smith’s (1996) rent gap argument is helpful in describing the process going on in Tampa Heights, but it is also important to remember the role of culture, class, and personal choice. The desires of middle class people to move into the historic houses of Tampa Heights seem to relate to culture as well as aesthetics (Ley 2003). The gentrifiers’ desires to move into Tampa Heights may also be an individual identity issue. Several seem to take pride in their status as “average Joes” who have bravely tried to take
advantage of Tampa Heights’ attractive housing (A Resident of Tampa Heights 1999:2; Jones 2001). However, The City of Tampa’s focus on revitalizing neighborhoods close to downtown seems to promote the influx of new residents(Noriega 1997, Waddell 1999).

We will now consider strategies that cities utilize in promoting gentrification. Neighborhood revitalization and urban renewal are often warning signs for gentrification (Smith 1996). Cities have to spruce up the potentially valuable neighborhoods in order to impress potential homeowners and businesses.

Historic preservation has sometimes been used as a tool for gentrification. It would seem that if a neighborhood is historic, people might want to invest in it. However, a historic area designation does not automatically lead towards gentrification. Coulson and Leinchenko (2003: 1598) argue that “designation of historic properties and historic districts is a popular, yet somewhat controversial, tool for revitalization of older, central city areas. In their study, they found that 10 years after designation, there was no change. Historic preservation, does, however, preserve historic buildings from being demolished in urban revitalization schemes (Coulson et. al 2003). Historic preservation does not automatically lead to neighborhood revitalization or even gentrification. However, in Tampa Heights, the historic designation has brought attention and status to the old Victorian homes in the neighborhood, which has brought more potential owners willing to pay high prices. The Civic Association members who own old Victorian homes are constantly bombarded with requests to sell their homes.

Gentrification and revitalization have also been linked to beautification projects (Wikepedia: The Free Encyclopedia; American Planning Association 2000). Cities often include park beautification in their general beautification strategies (Cranz 1982). In this
way, the improvement of parks may gentrify an area. One way that this works is through economic pressures. Parks increase the value of surrounding land (Kelly and Zieper 2000; Hepler 1995; Crompton 2001). If this land is owned by the city, such as is the case of public housing, it may be to their benefit to move the public housing to another location so that they can sell the land to people who are willing to pay high prices for the privilege of living by a park. This goes back to Smith’s (1996) rent gap theory. Parks have at times served as both a site and a symbol of gentrification (Smith 1996; Abu-Lughod 1994). In the case of Robles Park, there is a possibility that by upgrading the park, the area will become more attractive to potential homeowners. This will be discussed in more detail later.

Interestingly, The Tampa Heights Plan, despite its inclusiveness of all Tampa Heights residents, originally was started by a group which was largely made up of the very people who came into the community to gentrify the area. However, after a controversy the community was able to come up with a vision that sought to strengthen the social capital network throughout the neighborhood. The challenge here, it would seem, is for those residents who are least powerful economically stay active and act as a check upon the possible gentrification influences which were displayed in the beginning of the plan writing.

Strategies for Community Empowerment

Asset mapping, which we used to some degree in the Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative, is a process where communities look at the assets that they can mobilize towards the renewal of their neighborhood. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993)
suggest that communities ask for funding from outside sources only after they have inventoried community assets, used the information to create partnerships (for example, between cultural organizations and parks) and joined together to provide solutions to their problems on their own. We see a clear example of this process in Streets of Hope (Medoff and Sklar 1994). Medoff and Sklar document the process that the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (in Massachusetts) went through in order to approach the government from a powerful position with legitimacy. This neighborhood group was so successful that they were able to gain the legal power of eminent domain over their land. Usually eminent domain is only used by the government, so that they can take control over land and decide what to do with it. In this case, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative was able to take possession over vacant lots in their community. They used this power as one of the tools to reform their city.

Asset mapping and community mobilizing can provide the community with a central place in controlling their own destinies. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993: 354) write, “Clearly a community which has mobilized its internal assets is no longer content to be a recipient of charity. Rather, this mobilized community offers opportunities for real partnerships.” Asset mapping seems to be not only an empowering tool but also one that seeks to maximize the effects of any funds given to a community, since they will both have a clearer picture of the resources they have at their disposal and an idea of where the funds can be directed most efficiently.

After the assets have been identified, linkages should be made between the neighborhoods and local institutions, such as parks, neighborhoods, community colleges, hospitals, and police stations (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993). There is a tension here,
however. The difference between local citizen organizations and local institutions is that local organizations are made up of and controlled by community members, whereas local institutions are controlled by the outside (parks, schools, etc.).

According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993: 172), “Unlike local residents and citizen associations, which are clearly responsive to local conditions, challenges, and plans, the local institutions are often directed and controlled by forces and relationships outside the neighborhood… leaders of the local school, park, library, and police station answer first to the larger systems of which they are a part, not to local residents. Though it may be challenging, neighborhoods must find a way to have local institutions be responsive to their needs. In fact, Kromer (2000) writes that neighborhood residents who wish to revitalize their communities must work together with government, neighborhood institutions, and the private sector (see also Elwood 2002). Kromer recommends starting with a strategic plan (which Tampa Heights has).

There is also a precedent for using ethnographic research for gathering data on parks. Taplin, Scheld and Low (2002: 80) discuss the application of rapid ethnographic assessment procedures to study “an urban heritage park,” Independence National Historic Park, and its relationships with some of the cultural groups living in that city.” They write that park ethnography can “complement the opinion survey by uncovering the cultural ties between parks and local communities,” thereby strengthening the ties between parks and communities by the very process of “bringing local communities into the decision making loop” (Taplin et al 2002: 80). Likewise, The Mayor’s Beautification Program’s initiative was also supposed to accomplish the goal of strengthening community capacity by getting residents involved in the research and planning process.
Hayward (1989) writes that ethnographic methods may be useful tools for bringing community members into park planning. He notes the use of observations, behavioral mapping, interviews, transect walks, and focus groups to record park usage patterns and community wants, needs, and perceptions of/for the park. These methods are enhanced by archival research which helps to place the park in its historic context. Hayward (1989: 202-203) writes that the research not only provided information but also “strengthened the role of community participation and dialogue with the planners.” Several theorists see community involvement in planning as a social justice issue (Mattila 2002; Jennings 2004).

Parks as Potential Assets

The writers of the Tampa Heights Plan: Rebuilding Community consider parks to be assets to community building. Parks planning is also a good way to encourage community members to work with cities. Parks are one of the “assets within the community but largely controlled by outsiders” (Kretzmann and McKnight 1996: 4). Greenprinting is an interesting endeavor, since residents are called upon to lead the revitalization of a resource controlled by the City of Tampa.

Parks have the potential to be great assets to neighborhoods. Still, parks are spaces, and it is we who put meaning on them (Jacobs 1961; Low 1992). The Greenprinting Initiative works under the assumption that the process of park revitalization is meaningful in itself, acting as an instrument for helping to build community within the neighborhood. The process of building community is strongly related to the building of social capital networks throughout a neighborhood. Putnam (2000) writes that the most important practices of areas where there is high social capital
is not so much attendance of formal organizations, but rather involvement with neighbors in informal socializing. This type of socializing can take place in parks, among other places (Putnam 2000: 308; Jacobs 1961: 56).

In the late 1960s, Whitney North Seymour (1969: 7) wrote that parks could be an “affirmative force for counteracting blight and slum generation… holding residents who would otherwise run away when they reach middle income status.” Although it is open to question whether urban parks alone can keep the newly middle class in their previous areas, Seymour’s comment does underscore a couple of different issues. One issue is the importance of the outside environment. Attractive parks alone may not be enough to keep people in a city, but perhaps they can add a pleasant element to an otherwise bleak landscape. Another issue Seymour touches upon is the flight of the upwardly mobile away from their previous economically deprived areas. Wilson (1987) argues that the flight of upwardly mobile, middle class blacks from lower income areas leaves behind struggling neighborhoods made worse by their loss.

Rather than parks in themselves keeping people in neighborhoods, it seems as if one thing that can keep people in neighborhood is pride and a sense of identification with their neighborhood. A park can be a symbol around which residents can place their identity. As I will discuss, parks may become “symbolic spaces, deriving significance from historic precedents” (Abu-Lughod 1994, 233).

Parks and Identity

Communities sometimes link their identities to their parks or other public places. This concept is known as “place attachment” (Low 1992). Setha Low writes that, “a
cultural definition of place attachment implies that for most people there is a
transformation of the experience of a piece of land into a culturally meaningful and
shared symbol, that is, place” (Low 1992: 166). This concept has benefited from the
fields of Environmental Psychology, Anthropology, and Sociology (Low 1992).

Central Park, East Village and Greenwich Village, for example, are defining
features of New York. It seems that the potential for using parks as a way to gain identity
as a community is even more enhanced when people work together to revitalize the
parks. Residents can have the pride of having made the park theirs. Also, in the case of
Robles Park, the park has the added benefit of having a history. Even if they do not
pursue money for historic preservation, the park at least provides a link to the past. Still,
we cannot predict what people “should” feel. If residents never had the motivation to
revitalize a park, then they might not be excited about using it as a source of identity. It
is possible that residents have more pressing issues on their mind – like paying the rent.

In some areas, poorer communities have chosen to work together to make little
pocket parks or gardens (Seymour 1969). These gardens may also serve a practical
purpose, as residents sometimes grow vegetables in these gardens. In the case of the
Mayor’s Beautification Program’s Greenprinting, only a small group of residents (the
Civic Association) actively pursued the funds to bring Greenprinting to their
neighborhood. This is not to say, however, that the park cannot be a source of pride and
identity. From a social constructionist perspective, which we naturally come to from
considering the case of Washington Square Park, we see that parks take on the
significance we give to them (Taylor 1999). Thus it is easy to see that parks can be as
much or as little as what we make of them.
The Purposes of Parks throughout the Ages

The way that people think about parks and the way that parks are used have changed over time. Cranz (1982) names 4 types of parks found in various time periods. These park types are: The Pleasure Ground (1850-1900); The Reform Park (1900-1930); The Recreation Facility(1930-1965); and The Open-Space System (1965 and after). Interestingly, park designing came “well before the establishment of city planning in general” (Johnson 149).

The Pleasure Ground (1850-1900) existed mainly for the peace of mind of park visitors. The design was natural, with lots of grass, trees, and ponds. Care was taken to block the visibility of nearby city buildings. This style was inspired by transcendentalist thinking (Emerson), according to Cranz (1982). Cranz (1982: &) writes that “the softened popular version of the transcendentalist ideals attributed virtues to things found in nature like trees and meadows that could be transplanted or duplicated by human ingenuity.” Olmsted was the first designer of these parks. He wished to give urbanites a reprieve from city life. Pleasure grounds often presented the message of being “an expression of a high level of cultural achievement,” as the parks were often announced by “elaborate entrance gates” (Cranz 1982: 49). The pleasure playground was “quiet and serene,” in contrast to the “noisy and organized” reform park that was to come (Cranz 1982: 98). At the same time, the pleasure ground was not only a place for passive pastimes. Lawn tennis and other sports also took place on the pleasure ground. These sports were secondary to the parks’ aesthetic quality (Cranz 1982). In New York and Chicago, people could not use the grass for baseball games or even relaxation. This was to change, as in the next era, parks became playgrounds.
The “reform park” was often a playground. The emphasis in the Reform Park Period (1900-1930) was on organized play, teaching and learning. Parks were mainly frequented by working-class children and men, and park directors and experts grabbed hold of parks as a way to control and mold these people through activities. Children were taught how to methodically create vegetable gardens, or “school farms” (Cranz 1982: 88). Landscape architects even discussed the utility of labeling plants. Cranz (1982: 97) writes that the idea of using parks for such utilitarian purposes would have “horrified” Olmsted. Playgrounds were created by special park designers, rather than consultants or gardeners. Cranz (1982: 138) characterized the reform park as “a social worker,” in contrast to the pleasure ground’s position as a “pious patriarch”. It was in this period that water was used not to look at, as in the pleasure ground period, but rather for swimming and showering. Interestingly, “Swimming baths were introduced to encourage working class people, many without private baths, to be clean. Showers were part of the gymnastic equipment but also served as public bath systems” (Cranz 1982: 70). The reform park “was not so much a supplement to the pleasure ground as it was a substitute for the street” (Cranz 1982: 80). Social reformers, including Teddy Roosevelt, were concerned with the dangerous activities that children could get into in the streets. Some reformers made do by simply closing off streets which were less dangerous and more secluded, especially in areas where children had no access to parks or playgrounds per se.

Park directors adopted the ideology that every child should have access to a park/“recreation ground” (Cranz 1982: 82). It is during the Reform Park Era that the city started building neighborhood parks constructed on spare, vacant land. In this way, the urban renewal that was an impetus for park building was continued. Citizen groups
advocated the placing of playgrounds into existing “pleasure ground” parks. Park designers were able to place playground areas within parks, providing room for both. However, some believed that playgrounds best stood alone.

The Recreation Facility Era (1930-1965) was characterized by a lack of explicit ideology. Park administrators “abandoned their idealistic efforts to use parks as a mechanism of social reform” (Cranz 1982: 102). Parks were “basic,” “universal,” “essential,” and “just for fun” (Cranz 1982: 101-102). People had more and more leisure time, though not as much out of choice as the park administrators would like to say. Cranz writes that park administrators construed leisure time as a side-effect of people having “achieved their goals,” trying to ignore that people were mainly just out of work for the first decade of this period. One difference between the reform period and this period was that “social control of the masses no longer proceeded via improvement but rather via flattery” (Cranz 1982: 106).

Park Departments ignored the political-economic situation represented in massive unemployment, although park commissioners did note that the park service provided jobs for people while “channeling potentially disruptive energies into constructive work” (Cranz 1982: 105). In this way, parks continued their function as an “urban safety valve” for the masses (Cranz 1982: 105). Park administrators also focused more and more on building the status of parks as a bureaucracy. Cities linked parks with other institutions, such as schools.

Due to their lack of explicit ideology or purpose, park departments during the “recreation facility” period found themselves suffering from less money to work with during war time. In wartime, every governmentally funded program had to come up with
a way to justify why it was important. Through their earlier focus on existing to fulfill demand rather than a need or “norm of public service, parks had unwittingly placed themselves “on par with commercial producers of entertainment commodities” (Cranz 1982: 106-107). The park commissioners stated that parks were important because they boosted morale. Park leaders found out ways to use parks as a mechanism for promoting patriotism, including using patriotic colors, utilizing children to do Red Cross work, and even “full scale propaganda campaigns” (Cranz 1982: 110). During wartime, playgrounds were renamed day camps. This name “associate[d] children’s activities with those of military camp” (Cranz 1982: 113).

After the war, park departments were able to create new playgrounds again. Playgrounds were once again just filling peoples’ demands for more recreation facilities. Although during the reform park period, parks were sometimes created out of vacant land, in this period the association was even more frequent. Cranz (1982) mentions that urban renewal sometimes proceeded through the creation of parks in public housing or older, depreciated areas of the city. They sometimes teamed up with the Housing Authority to bring parks to the public housing that could be used by the whole neighborhood. This was ideologically supposed to “break down barriers between public housing tenants and private home owners” (Cranz 1982: 108). It also seems to fit in with the Parks Department’s “recreation facility era” goal of entrenching themselves as a bureaucracy in concert with other bureaucracies. The construction of parks in housing projects or run-down neighborhoods “involved or abetted slum clearance” (Cranz 1982: 120), since parks may be built on vacant or condemned land. Interestingly, though not surprisingly, “park commissioners never mentioned land values, business interests, or
political-economic considerations of any kind in their reports and claimed to be responding simply to abstract demand or need” (Cranz 1982: 120). Cranz (1982: 84) concludes that parks acted as “an early form of urban renewal,” replacing “city dumps, cemeteries, slums… rooftops… vacant lots.” I will discuss this line of thought later. Some theorists, such as Jane Jacobs, caution us that park construction is not a direct route to neighborhood revitalization. Yet, beautification and urban renewal have been one of the purposes of parks ever since urban parks were first created.

The current “Open-Space System,” starting in 1965, is characterized by more overt political struggles and a “new permissiveness” and openness in ideas of how to use parks as well as what constitutes parks (Cranz 1982: 138). We also see parks responding to the tumultuous times. Towards the end of the recreation era, in 1965, people start seeing parks as a place for crime. Parks were considered crime-ridden and perhaps even “part of the urban crisis rather than its cure” (Cranz 1982: 137). It is in this era that cities begin to be most unrestricted in how to use parks for social good. In times of riots, demonstrations, etc., cities attempted to find ways to use parks to “reassemble all the broken parts of the urban mass peacefully within their boundaries and thus serve as symbols of the cosmopolitan ideal which the street – now unsafe to walk on – no longer embodied” (Cranz 1982: 137).

New activities (such as “be-ins, chalk-ins, and happenings”); kite flying, movie bus, trampoline, tennis, and the infusion of more elite sports, such as tennis, start in this era (Cranz 1982: 139-140). Concerts, artwork, and theatre were brought to the parks. All of this new activity took place during a time of extreme controversy. Park officials were not sure how to respond to political protests, according to Cranz (1982). City officials
were confused as well, but they often responded by sending out policemen to disperse the
crowds by violently clubbing people who had gathered (Smith 1996). At times, such as
during the Vietnam War, the function of parks as a place to protest came into conflict (at
least ideologically) with the idea of parks as pleasure grounds. Since park departments
were “obliged to respond to popular demand, protests or concerts which threatened to
ruin landscaping were sometimes rescheduled to smaller, less visible parks (Cranz 1982:
142-143). Near the mid-1970s, however, park departments decided that they did not
want to see the “overuse and underdevelopment of parks,” so they did not allow activities
that were too active (including music festivals), for fear of ruining the landscaping (Cranz
1982).

At the same time, parks started looking much different, as some parks consisted
of modern architecture, fake trees, and a lack of vegetation. Play structures were made of
materials that could not be vandalized, rather than natural materials. Cranz (1982: 149)
writes that some people liked the new designs, as they suggested “continuity” with the
city, although others felt that parks should provide a reprieve from all of the “concrete,
steel and glass” found in cities. “Race” often became a concern of the park departments
during the open space era. Cranz announces that this shift came in the mid 1960s: “The
black population had become an explicit and legitimate, if controversial, beneficiary of
park programming by the beginning of the open-space era,” (Cranz 1982: 202). Previous
to the 1960s, park departments blatantly ignored or very subtly mentioned black users. In
the 1910s, Black residents in Harlem could not even get a “playground to replace the play
streets developed by welfare organizations,” try as they might (Cranz 1982:200). In the
1960s, the needs of Black Americans were finally included in park planning. Cranz

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(1982: 201) writes that “administrators began to claim that they could use [parks] as a way to keep the city ‘cool’ – to keep ghetto youth quiet and satisfied. This was no melting-pot rhetoric… the park was simply a facility for the use of …the free time of angry, potentially violent black youths.” Throughout the ages, urban parks were used not only to provide an “escape valve” for the stress of urban life, but also a means to control people who might potentially disrupt the “status quo” (Cranz 1982: 201).

The preceding discussion helps to place Robles Park into political and historical context. Robles Park was created during the “Recreation Facility” period, but it still had a strong pleasure ground principle to it due to its natural qualities. The pond in the middle of the park was originally a swamp. It was not used for swimming as during the “Reform Park” era. Instead, the water served aesthetic purposes. As some Tampa Heights residents have told me, in the past the park served as a background for wedding pictures. The aesthetic features of Robles Park were a large reason why current residents chose the park for renovation, as I will discuss later. At the same time, minors were not officially allowed to vote for which park they wanted revitalized, and the youth we interviewed were most concerned with park recreation facilities.

The mandatory changes to Robles Park, necessitated by the conditions of the grant, are: a water feature (such as a play fountain), a community garden, and artwork. Although all of these features seem to place the park as a pleasure ground, community gardens would have been looked askance upon by Olmsted (Cranz 1982), and play fountains seem to fit more in with the reform park or recreation facility era. Artwork would have, however, been consistent with the parks’ purpose as a cultural medium. The very eclecticism of the Robles Park design would place it within the “recreation facility”
era, when facilities and aesthetics were mixed and “the social meanings of those things and properties” were most important (Chicago south Park Comission 1940, qtd in Cranz 1982: 122).

The Mental Health Aspect of Urban Parks

Psychologists started linking parks with mental health in the late 1940s, during the period in which parks were conceived as recreation facilities. As Cranz (1982: 106) writes, “This interest carries over from the pleasure ground era, but the focus was no longer just on the preservation or restoration of health but on the pursuit of happiness itself.” One of the principles behind the Mayor’s Beautification Program’s interest in beautifying neighborhoods is the belief that open space in urban areas can enhance the mental and physical health of residents. They cite the National Recreation and Parks Association’s (1995) Policy Statement on Recreation and Health, which states that recreation and leisure activities can enhance mental health and self esteem (Mayor’s Beautification Program 2004).

In the 1960s, several theorists wrote that parks and other open spaces can help ameliorate the negative effects of the congestion, traffic, buildings, and pollution of cities. They write that parks are more than a nice touch to a neighborhood – they are a necessity to the health of urbanites (Abrams 1965, Gordon 1963, Udall 1963). Udall states that parks, trees, and fountains can serve to provide a “balanced environment” by providing a reprieve from the traffic and concrete of urban cities (Seymour 1969: 8). If we consider that for over 99% of human existence, we were gatherers and hunters, surrounded by an environment without cars, cities, and everything that comes with urban
life; it only makes sense that humans lose something if surrounded only by buildings and concrete.

Much has been said about the stress that comes with the noisy and crowded urban environment that many of us live in (Veitch and Arkkelin 1995). Parks may act as a way to escape these stressors. The idea of parks as a pleasure ground for mental relaxation still lives on today. This idea has some plausibility. Parks are not going to solve the problems of modern urban life, but they at least provide splashes of green and a place for relaxation in our stressful world.

Parks and Safety

At the same time, we should not take for granted that parks are necessarily safe or good places. We must move away from thinking of parks are “boons conferred on the deprived populations of cities” (Jacobs 1961: 89). Jane Jacobs (1961) discusses the dangers of urban parks, comparing the isolated urban park to noisy sidewalks where children sometimes play. Parks are offered as an alternative to these sidewalks, under the premise that they are safer than the streets (Jacobs 1961; Cranz 1982). However, we do not often question this notion. Youth may know what streets to avoid, and this knowledge can protect them (Jacobs 1961: 74-88). They can also choose (or be told) to play on busy sidewalks where they will often be in the eyesight of many adults (Jacobs 1961). Jacobs encourages us to think critically about parks. Abandoned parks are not only an asset gone to waste, but a safety concern (Jacobs 1961: 89-111). In Jacob’s discussion, it seems that parks can only add to the sparkle of already good
neighborhoods. Only if people are committed to a park’s upkeep can the park stay a (relatively) safe and fun place.

This reality does not preclude the possibility of park renovation/revitalization as a social good. A deserted park is often more dangerous than a park with people in it, and park renovation can potentially bring more visitors. Park revitalization can bring more attention to a park, which may be good if the park is avoided due to a reputation of being dangerous. Parks that have been labeled as dangerous often maintain that reputation, even when they objectively are the site for less crime than the neighborhood as a whole (Hayward 1989). A well-maintained park which is frequented by many people can even decrease crime (Kuo and Sullivan 2001).

It is clear that park revitalization projects which hope to be successful must respond to security concerns. In an ideal situation, “Standards of behavior are set and will be monitored not only by law enforcement but also by neighbors and users of the park” (Briggs-Marsh and Warren 2000: 253).

Safety issues ultimately can be related to the question of which groups have the “right” to use parks (Whitzman 2002: 299-322). For example, the access of women to parks is severely limited by concerns about safety (Franck and Paxson 1989; Whitzman 2002). Therefore, Whitzman wonders, “‘whose park’ is it?” (Whitzman 2002: 301). The question of “whose park is it?” refers back to Smith (1996) and Abu-Lughod’s (1994) discussion of the protests over Tompkins Square Park. Parks are “contested space” (Whitzman 2002: 301).
Parks as Sites for Open Conflict

Parks are not always simply “nice” places to take family or gather with neighbors. They can become a site of conflict (Hayward, 1989). Cranz (1982: x) supposes that this may be because of the “ambiguous” quality of parks as well as the city’s struggle with how to define the purpose of parks. Parks are often involved in discussions about urban social problems, but “never for a moment do they think that the institution of the park itself might invite conflict because of the ambiguity of the norms for its proper use” (Cranz 1982: x).

Various groups may wish to fight for control over park design, park management, and who is accepted in the park (Berman 1986). Francis (1989) explains that some people may assert symbolic ownership. For example, he writes that teenagers may claim a bench (or the whole park), or a community can take responsibility for the upkeep of their park (Francis 1989). The downside of symbolic ownership is that some people may block others from accessing the park. He adds that conflict is an inevitable and desirable aspect of public space: “Conflict and negotiation are hallmarks of the democratic process and the concept of public space” (Francis 1989: 165). Ownership can be as simple as teenagers symbolically taking over certain areas of a park, or as volatile as city governments using the police to eject the homeless.

Parks have often acted as places where political issues could come to the forefront. Tompkins Square Park is a classic example of a park providing not only a place to gather, but also acting as a symbol for identity, ownership and control. Diana Gordon (1994) writes that residents near Tompkins Square Park (on the lower East side of New York) and the government have constantly struggled over control of
Tompkins Park. This park is said to have been given to the city by Peter Stuyvesent’s ancestors under the condition that it would always remain public property. Neil Smith (1996) dates mass protests in Tompkins Square Park back to 1874. Whether in response to fears over the safety of the park, or as a way to prevent the homeless from sleeping in parks, police have at various times imposed curfews (Gordon 1994; Smith 1996). Many residents of East Village believed there were hidden implications behind control of the park. Smith (1996: 26) seconds this notion, explaining that New York was enacting a “traditional park gentrification strategy of curfews and closures followed by ‘restoration’” To many, Tompkins Square Park was considered the last stronghold in the battle against gentrification.

The Tompkins Square Park riots, if taken as symbolic of gentrification as a whole, explicitly show the violence of gentrification (Smith 1996). Abu-Lughod writes of residents protesting the police departments’ strict policing of the park, “Many argued that after years of tolerance, police activity was being suddenly and radically stepped up in the area to ‘clear the ground’ for further gentrification” (Abu-Lughod 1994: 249). The ideology of park cleaning has at times been used as an excuse or cover for ejecting undesirable elements from a neighborhood, according to Abu-Lughod. She writes:

Battles between residents and police and controversies over redesigning park spaces have, indeed, been recurrent themes in the area’s history….Battles erupted in the 1960s when the park became the preferred open space for ‘hippies’ and Vietnam War protesters, or again in the 1980 when ‘cleaning up the park’ became central to the city’s and developers’ strategy of ‘cleaning up the neighborhood.” (Abu-Lughod 1994:7)
In 1988 and 1990, residents resisted police-imposed curfews on Tompkins Square Park, carrying signs such as “Gentrification = Class War” and chanting “‘it’s our fuckin’ park’” (Abu-Lughod 1994: 241). Police responded by beating residents until they left.

According to Diana Gordon (1994), the City of New York has been aware of the potential for communities to come together around recreational renovation, and they have at times succeeded in bringing community building exercises to a close. In 1967, East Village residents began to negotiate with the city to gain control of Christodora House, a 16-story building built in 1928 which towered over the park. The city did not keep its promises to the residents, raided the building, and closed the building. Gordon (1994: 223) writes that “The Christodora House struggle may have been a precursor of the conversion of the Tompkins Square neighborhood from a predominately working-class enclave to a target of gentrification without a strong community capacity to resist.”

Community capacity for change is one of the goals sought after in the Greenprinting Initiative.

Thus, how do we reconcile Gordon’s recollection of the Christodora House struggle with the City of Tampa’s sponsorship of the Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative? Ironically or not, the City of Tampa has sponsored the MBP’s ideology that park revitalization yields stronger, more cohesive communities. It is possible that city officials in Tampa truly want community members to come together and improve their communities, with no hidden agendas. An improved community capacity, according to Gordon (1994), can be utilized as a capacity to resist gentrification. Yet gentrification can perhaps be promoted by park revitalization if the gentrifying residents in the community are the main ones to take part in the community-building fostered through
park revitalization. In this case, residents who wish to get rid of the poorer elements of
their community may actually strengthen their alliance, and in so doing help ease the way
for officials to further gentrify the neighborhood.

It is not a stretch to consider that many of the newer, more middle income
residents want the poorer residents to move out of the community. One resident typifies
the “revanchist” attitude against the impoverished that Smith (1996) discusses. An
anonymous resident expressed his frustration and disgust at his neighbors (who were
there before him) in *The Voice of Tampa Heights: The Official Newsletter of Tampa’s
Historic Uptown Neighborhood*. He writes:

> You’re driving home to, yes, a nice house—nice home trespassed by the
> violence of loud, obnoxious, trash-mouth drug dealers bicycling by and
> hanging out on your street; thundering cars blasting four million decibel
> music spewing words like f---; dirty, homeless people with nowhere to
goto... rowdy, unsupervised guys hanging out on your street corner... and
> let’s not forget the hollering and yelling all hours of the day and
> night....*So what do you do? Do you and your neighbors firebomb the
> ‘trouble making’ houses and duplexes?* (Resident of Tampa Heights
> 1999:2, emphasis mine)

As background information, I should mention that starting in 1997, around the
time when the Mayors Heights project for land redevelopment, arsons set 60 houses on
fire in Tampa Heights and Ybor City. Nobody knows for sure who set these fires or why.
Smith (2001: 1) writes in a news article, “Some suspected Tampa was saving demolition
costs for clearing unwanted vacant houses. Some pointed to the nonprofits. Some blamed
developers. And many, like Serralles, suspected vagrants were starting fires.”

The newsletter in which the residents’ letter was printed was sent out by the
Tampa Heights Civic Association, although the resident who wrote the above letter was
not necessarily a Civic Association member.
The Tampa Heights Plan writers, largely newcomers who are gentrifying the neighborhood, originally took aim at getting public housing out of the neighborhood. Robles Park residents showed up at the meetings in full force after finding out about this section of the plan. Karp writes, “[A resident of Robles Park Village] came to meetings when she heard that her neighbors, hoping to gentrify the neighborhood, wanted to move low-income residents out... She worked to change the plan” (Karp 2002; Behnken 2002). Yet, this is not to say that all of the residents who are gentrifying the neighborhood want to eliminate poorer residents from the neighborhood. One woman who is active in the Tampa Heights Civic Association and the Junior Civic Association told me: “Poor people are not bad people.” She has often stated that the correct way to improve one’s community is not to push poor people from one community to another.

There has been controversy in Tampa Heights about whether the presence of homeless in the neighborhood can be diminished. Some would like to see soup kitchens closed, citing sanitary problems, fear of the homeless, and the desire not to have to see homeless in the neighborhood. Former president of the Tampa Heights Civic Association Ralph Schuler states, “It’s a sanitary problem. Either you’re a social service and you control your environment or you’re not. You don’t do things halfway.” (Girona 2003c:1). Those who run operations serving the homeless, however, say that these arguments are just excuses to kick homeless people out of the neighborhood. Matus writes, “Tensions between south side neighborhoods and the homeless... have boiled over in recent months. Homeless advocates say efforts to revitalize gritty areas such as Tampa Heights and Ybor City, both magnets for homeless people, may be one reason why” (Matus 2003:1). Eunice Justice, a resident of Tampa Heights and owner of the lot
that Schuler commented upon, directly links beautification with efforts to kick undesirable elements out of the neighborhood. She says, “‘I don’t see anything they have done to beautify this community, but run people out who they don’t like… I don’t see them helping people’ ” (Girona 2003:1).

Park beautification may end up being used as a reason to address the existence of homeless people in the community. If park beautification is part of a wider gentrification strategy, then parks themselves will be gentrified through police “cracking down” on the homeless. Interestingly, gentrification of cities is said to have caused the widespread homelessness we see today (Dreier and Applebaum 1991). We speak of contested space, but when it comes to the homeless, no place is theirs. Ferrel (1996: 21) writes that due to public nuisance laws, “homeless populations are perpetually in the wrong place, unavoidably occupying space that has been legally defined as outside their rights and control”.

In Massey Park in downtown Tampa, local members of a student activist organization called Food Not Bombs were arrested for feeding the homeless. Ackerman writes, “Mayor Pam Iorio directed police officers to uphold the loosely enforced ordinance because Massey Park doesn't have proper facilities for such feedings, and downtown business owners want their storefronts protected from leftover trash and human waste” (Ackerman 2004: 1). Two months after the ban was lifted, the city dropped charges against these students. The city plans to change the laws regarding use of the parks.

One Orlando lawyer commented about the Massey Park controversy, “‘Parks are public fora. People have the right to use the park.’” (Ackerman 2004:1). Still, the very
existence of conflict shows that parks are still contested territory. At some point, the students knew that they were risking arrest but they still went to the parks to feed the homeless. Ackerman reports that the very “goal” of the Massey Park feedings was to “feed the homeless and change the law” (Ackerman 2004:1). They were then pleased to gain victory sooner than they thought. One member of the group, a USF Anthropology major, stated: “‘Everyone I know is pretty excited... It was unexpected. I was always optimistic, but I didn't think it would be over this quickly.’” (Ackerman 2004:1). The status of neighborhood parks, as public places which do not clearly belong to either the community or the city, allows parks to be used as a place where political issues are played out.

We will now look at the Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative as a park beautification program that was intended to bring together a gentrifying neighborhood. This initiative was heavily supported by Tampa Heights Civic Association members who theoretically sought to gain support from the neighborhood as a whole.
Chapter Three: Methodology

My overriding research question is: Can park revitalization bring a diverse neighborhood like Tampa Heights together and, if so, how? The question that the Mayor’s Beautification Program officially brought me on board to answer was: What specific changes do residents want to be made to the parks? Finally, my supervisor, Lena Young Green, asked me to find statistics on the state of youth and youth associations through my collaboration with the Florida Center for Community Design and Research. This last objective did not work out as hoped. The collaborative aspect of the project was not very strong. I did address the last objective through qualitative data-gathering, as I did with the other two questions.

The methodology that I utilized in this project can be broken into pre-park selection and post-park selection data-gathering. Before the residents chose Robles Park for renovation, we (students from the Communications Class and I) collected data that residents could consult previous to voting on a park. Afterwards, I attempted to find out what changes residents would like to have made to the park. Throughout, I was analyzing the process to see if any conclusions could be reached in regards to Greenprinting as a way to build a sense of community in Tampa Heights. An architect drew up the visual Greenprinting plan for Robles Park using the data that resulted from the qualitative data gathering.
Data Gathering Prior to Park Selection

The first phase of data gathering was brief and directed at providing information about the parks to the residents of Tampa Heights so that they could, in theory, objectively choose one park out of the four Tampa Heights parks eligible for renovation. The Tampa Heights Civic Association had insisted to the Mayor’s Beautification Program from the beginning that one park be selected by the residents based on objective information, so as to not divide the community. Pre-park selection data gathering was intended to provide information about the various parks. This information was to be consulted by residents previous to voting. The Florida Center for Community Design and Research presented GIS maps of assets and indicators (childcare centers, youth programs, percentage of walking population around the parks, places of worship, schools, percentage of youth, and percentage of elderly population) in relation to the various parks.

The preliminary data that the undergraduate Communication majors and I gathered came from park observations and park inventories. As previously stated, we gathered this data in order to help inform park selection.

Park Observations

Students from Janna Jones’ Communications Class and I systematically observed the four Tampa Heights parks for a month, using a form generated by the Mayor’s Beautification Program. This information was intended to aid residents in deciding which park to select. The form, located in the appendix, asked for the number of people in the park and the activities in which residents participated.
Park Inventories

Students from Janna Jones’ Communications Class recorded the attributes of the various parks, such as percentage of land covered by trees, number of security lights, and number of parking spaces. A form was provided to the students by the Mayor’s Beautification Program. It is in the appendix.

Discovering the Changes that Residents Want Made to Robles Park

After Robles Park was selected for renovation, I needed to find out what specific changes residents would like to be made to the park. Therefore, I conducted focus groups and interviews with people who were stakeholders of Robles Park due to their proximity to the park or their frequent utilization of the park. I informally interviewed residents who lived near Robles Park and held focus groups with youth and adults who frequented the park.

My methodology consisted of informal interviews, focus groups, surveys, and ongoing participant observation. I relied upon residents to tell me what changes they would like to see in the park. My observations lead me to interview residents who were not represented in the meeting, such as youth at the Robles Park Recreation Center and black homeowners near Robles Park.

I also asked Tampa Heights Civic Association members to fill out questionnaires. I found myself crunched for time since the holiday season was rapidly approaching; and with it the end of my official research. The questionnaire responses were still useful, working to supplement what they were already saying at the meetings. Finally, I and the undergraduate Communications students designed a survey to be mailed to Tampa
Heights residents. Surveys were used to accomplish triangulation – double checking of results using multiple methods. These surveys also were important because informal interviews only allowed us with a small slice of residents of Tampa Heights.

Informal Interviews

The Saturday after Robles Park had won the vote, Lena Young Green (of the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association and the Tampa Heights Civic Association) and I walked to houses around the park and passed out flyers to people who were at home. These flyers notified residents of the results and informed them of the next meeting date. I took this time to interview 7 residents. I asked them what changes they would like to be made to Robles Park.

Focus groups

Four focus groups were conducted with about twenty youth and four staff of the Robles Park Recreation Center. Janna Jones, her communications class, and I conducted these focus groups inside of a noisy recreation center. We did not attempt to impose order outside of the small (approximately 7 member) groups of children and staff that we interviewed.

I conducted one focus group with youth and staff of the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association. Three youth and two staff members attended this focus group, which was at the YMCA. I started the focus group by writing “Robles Park” on a dry erase board in a YMCA Conference Room. I asked the youth: “What are the best assets of Robles Park?” They originally laughed; one child said “nothing.” Through further
conversation, I realized that they thought I was talking about Robles Park public housing. For purposes of clarity, in this thesis, “Robles Park” means simply the park. The housing will be referred to as “Robles Park Village” or “Robles Park Public Housing.” The misunderstanding of the young man in the focus group illustrates the connection between Robles Park and Robles Park Village Public Housing. This connection is implied in the similarity of the names. Once this misunderstanding was cleared up, we discussed ways that Robles Park could be improved. Results are discussed in my findings chapter.

Lastly, right before Thanksgiving 2003, I conducted a focus groups with attendees of the November 25th Greenprinting Committee meeting. This meeting was made up of 3 staff members of Robles Park and Recreation, 4 residents of Robles Park, the head of the MBP, Dr. Janna Jones, Councilman Kevin White, and the head of the private elementary school across the street from the park. It was conducted around a table at the Robles Park Recreation Center.

Surveys

In order to elicit responses from a wider variety of people throughout Tampa Heights, we constructed a survey to be mailed out to all the houses in Tampa Heights. The Mayor’s Beautification program mailed 5,000 surveys to households in Tampa Heights. We used a survey from a previous Greenprinting project in Seminole Heights as our template for the survey, and I led the Communications Class in modifying the questions to make them suitable for Tampa Heights. This survey was also slightly revised by attendees of the November 25th Tampa Heights Greenprinting meeting. The survey asks the respondents
about their park attendance, household demographics, and what they believe needs to be improved at the park. A copy of the survey is in the appendix.

Participant observation

For a total of 4 months, I observed the process of residents coming together to plan a park. I noticed who was at the meetings, who wasn’t and what was said. I attended the planning session after Robles Park was voted upon and the unveiling of the Robles Park plan. These ongoing observations, which are reflected in my conclusions, fed back into my research. I purposefully interviewed those residents who, despite being stakeholders of Robles Park due to their proximity to or use of the park, were not well represented in the Greenprinting meetings. After my official position was over, I presented my findings at a “charette” workshop and attended the unveiling ceremony for the Robles Park plan.
Chapter Four: Findings

I will now discuss my findings. These findings are grouped according to methodology and what phase of the project they represent. For example, park observations and park inventories represent the exploratory data-gathering phase that was intended to give residents information they could use in the voting process. All of these findings are reflected in my conclusions.

Park Observation Findings

Morgan Park had the lowest attendance. The park averaged around two people per hour during our observations. Calvin Taylor was visited by approximately ten people per hour. Approximately eleven people per hour visited Plymouth Playground. Robles Park had the highest attendance. The park averaged around eighteen people per hour. All of the parks had peak attendance during the late afternoon after school. Robles Park was well utilized in general. Specific activities at the various parks are summarized in the “Setting” section of this thesis. For observation data, consult the appendix.

Park Inventory Results

All of the parks except for Morgan Street Park had parking lots, bike racks, drinking fountains, benches (Robles has 16), and a basketball court. None of the parks have barbeque facilities. Calvin Taylor and Robles Park have paved walkways. Morgan Street Park has a rubber play area surfacing, whereas all of the other parks have sand play
area surfacing. (Calvin Taylor and Robles Park are expected to get rubber play area surfacing in the 2005 fiscal year, according to one former staff member of the Mayor’s Beautification Program). It seems that Robles Park has the most of almost everything. Park inventory results are listed in the appendix.

Voting

The information that we compiled was presented to residents before they voted. The data that the students and I collected, as well as the GIS asset maps that the FCCD&R had created (see appendix), were placed in a way that the residents could examine them before making their decision.

There was confusion in the voting process. The flyer contained ambiguous information about voting. The flyer stated that a workshop was to be held on October 28th and that the “park will be selected in early November by Tampa Heights residents.” This flyer was placed at people’s doors by a staff member of the Mayor’s Beautification Program, and then passed out to Robles public housing residents by undergraduate students. Students passed out the flyers on the afternoon of the October 28th meeting. They told residents of Robles housing that it was really important they come to the meeting that night, because the vote would be held at that time. In retrospect, it seems that the Mayor’s Beautification Program, which was going through a change in staff, was not too sure about when they wanted to hold the voting. They ended up holding the voting on the 28th of October, although on the flyer they had advertised the 28th as just a workshop. The students who had worked so hard at passing out the flyers expressed concern, so the staff of the Mayor’s Beautification Program decided to hold two voting
days – one at the October 28th meeting and the other on the first Tuesday in November. About 20 people voted during the first voting day. They were mainly the same people who had been involved in the Greenprinting process all along.

Interestingly, two residents who spoke at the meeting before the vote stated that the data had given them a more informed perspective, and that as a result they felt Robles Park had the most available assets. Several residents stated that they “love the water.” One resident said that the history of the park, the fact that it already had a “water feature” and the visibility of the park from the interstate shaped his decision. (The resident referred to the pond when he spoke of the “water feature,” but one may wonder whether the rule that the park must have a play fountain or other “water feature” added to it prejudiced the residents towards Robles Park.) It was refreshing to see that residents who lived closer to, for example, Morgan Street Park, would vote for Robles Park based presumably on its merits rather than its proximity to them.

From the beginning of the process, it seemed to the undergraduate students I worked with that Morgan Street Park would be chosen, since it was closer to many of the meeting attendees’ houses. Also, the former staff member who headed up the Greenprinting Initiative stated that Morgan Street was small enough that $75,000 could provide a huge impact and a noticeable difference. Robles Park had the disadvantage of being so big that $75,000 might have only been a drop in the bucket. Still, many voters from the first group voted for Robles. The head of the Junior Civic Association, Lena Young Green, states:

I expected that anyone who lived around any specific park would vote for that particular park. That is what I expected. I was pleasantly surprised to find that at the end of the voting to find that people from other areas around other parks came and truly looked at four parks and
made a decision. Even though the park in their area would have benefited them most directly, they decided that Robles Park would be the one that they would vote for. Now we have a buy-in from the community as a whole.

These votes from the October 28th meeting were combined with those votes from the second voting day. The second voting day was held in Robles Park recreation center. I suspect that the location may have biased results. However, having the “polls” open for a few hours at Robles Park recreation center enabled more residents to come. The location particularly made it easier for Robles Park housing residents to vote. Therefore, it was a departure from the way that Robles Park residents had been uninvolved. Over 100 people voted on the second voting day. Children were not officially allowed to vote, but since they wanted to vote, one of the Civic Association members allowed them to write down which park they wanted, stating that these “votes” were only to be used in a case of a tie. There was no tie. Robles Park was selected for renovation by an overwhelming margin.

Not all residents knew that voting was being held, so on the day of the second vote, Lena Young Green went around the vicinity of Robles park and told people to go and vote. Her thoughts on voting and civic participation are very telling and applicable to voting and civic participation in general. Young Green states:

A special effort has to be made. Whereas some people by just getting a letter, their natural inclination is to get involved, the other group you have to go above and beyond and spend more time and resources… There is a group that doesn’t believe in coming to meetings… But on the day of the election I found that was really telling to me… there were so many young people, particularly young African American males that I just stopped on the street and said ‘go vote.’ And immediately you get that look from them like, ‘no, no.’ And I suspect a lot of it is that a high number of those young men, particularly those who live in the public housing, have some kind of felony conviction on their record, don’t trust
authority, don’t feel connected, and know that as a citizen whose been in trouble they wouldn’t be able to vote. So in the next breath of my saying go and vote I said “You don’t need any ID, nobody’s going to ask you any questions; it’s just four different parks, you just go in there and just mark a park. You don’t have to give your name, your address, or anything. And you could see the difference on their faces and so many of them went in and actually voted because they got that assurance. But had it not been for that one on one conversation they would never have come in and voted. And a big percentage of our residents fit into that category… The day of the voting was another educational thing for me. And it was a great opportunity to stand out there and bring in that crowd who ordinarily would have just rode by or walked on the other side of the street, feeling disconnected from what was happening in the community. So again, the challenge is how to continue to engage that group.

As of this writing, the renovation of Robles Park is not finished. It remains to be seen whether true community building and a lessening of disenfranchisement will occur through the process of fund-raising to supplement the Lykes’ Foundation’s seed money.

Focus Group Results

The needs/wants of the youth and staff of Robles Recreation Center, four Tampa Heights Junior Civic Center youth, and the students of the private elementary school near the park fall into five main categories. They spoke of cleaning/maintenance improvements (including pond); the construction of additional buildings (such as a gym or craft center); recreation center improvements; the need for additional miscellaneous items; and the need to use the park for community events. Below I will discuss these findings in more detail.

Cleaning the park, especially the pond, topped the list of priorities for park revitalization. There also needs to be something done about the smell in the park. One youth interviewed as part of a youth organization said that the park, “smells like pee.”
Opening up the bathrooms in the park and adding new bathrooms were also frequently requested.

Many residents also wanted recreation center improvements, although they were informed that this might be outside of the scope of the current project. Additional construction, such as arts and craft room and a gym was also requested.

Additional items requested included more lights, more park benches, soda machines, a fence around the pond, and drinking fountains.

Aesthetic changes requested included landscaping, a fountain in the pond, murals painted by Tampa Heights residents, statues of famous persons, and a bridge across the pond.

Some participants talked about using the park for community events such as sporting events, concerts, and barbeques. The students at the private elementary school also had lots of ideas for using the park for fund raising activities. Students at the private elementary school by the park had the same basic requests as the Recreation Center attendees. A list of the findings is in the appendix – focus group 11/18 findings.

Discussion arising out of the focus group I conducted with Greenprinting Committee members was cultural in nature. Members discussed whether to promote “historical integrity” by planting flowers around the pond or bass fishing. They also considered whether the pond could be turned into a “natural lake.” The members are very aware of the grant money that communities can get for historic renovation. The historic aspect of Tampa Heights has been a selling point for the community and a help in its revival.
They also discussed what image they wanted to present of the community through the park’s appearance. One person suggested that they engrave names on a fence like in Tampa’s Al Lopez Park. Someone responded to this that they did not want a fence and they should “keep the park as open as you can get it”. Another idea that the committee members had was to use art as a way to reach back to the “historic fabric of the neighborhood”. They even discussed the possibility of putting statues of historic figures from Tampa Heights past.

This focus group got into a depth of meaning that the others had not. The focus group participants were primed for this type of discussion because many of the participants were aware of the historical issues surrounding Tampa Heights. It also helped that I had already presented to them the lists from other focus groups, so they did not feel the need to address specific improvements. In fact, most of the participants probably could not have addressed specific improvements in the same way as the youth who attended the park every day.

Art, fences, and a community flower are all symbols that can help portray a certain image to those who come into the park. Rather than free-listing park improvements, the Greenprinting Committee members focused on how to symbolically reaffirm their rich history through park revitalization.

Informal Interview Results

The need to clean the pond; diminish the smell coming from the pump station; use the park for youth events; increase security lighting; improve the sports fields; and
expand the playground came out of the informal walking interviews on Saturday, November 22nd, 2003.

Two men by the west side of the park were most concerned with utilizing the park for boy scouts/girl scouts and other youth activities that would occupy the youths’ free time. Another man talked about using the park as a site for job fairs or army recruitment.

A married couple of the older residents who had been in the neighborhood before the construction of I-275, talked about the history of the park and said they would like the park to be restored to something resembling its historic significance. They told us that fishing tournaments used to be held in the park. The older man said “They need to stock the lake so you can fish.” The couple spoke about the ranger that used to patrol the park, keeping it safe. The also stated the need to convert the pond back into a “healthy environment” for wildlife instead of its current state as a retention pond. Schoolchildren used to come out “to study the species of animals in the middle of the pond”.

The older couple also suggested the possibility of once again using the park for weddings or other events. This possibility was also suggested in other interviews and focus groups. Not only was Robles Park once a community gathering place, it was also an educational center for students, as they would study the various species of animals that flocked to the middle of the pond. A list of the results from the informal interviews may be found in appendix H.

Questionnaire Results

In their written questionnaire responses, Tampa Heights Civic Association members envision a visually attractive park where the pond would be the focal point. At
the same time, they see the park as a place for activities such as baseball, community activities, and organized youth programs. One respondent writes, “Update activity center and have city programs, community activities, put lights around the lake, add a modern playground, do something with the lake, partial seawall.” Another person comments that the park is not safe. According to another resident, “It’s pretty; like the exercise trail, basketball court; park is great but walk to get to the park is not very safe”. Several residents recommended better lighting to address security issues. One response to the question “What do you generally think about Robles park? (Likes, dislikes…)” stood out. The respondent answered: “Like the location in the heart of the community. Like the open space, lake, don’t like dirtiness of park or dirtiness of lake, or trash around park, Don’t like the lake being a retention pond instead of a healthy vital lake for fishing like it used to be.” Concerns about the lake turned up in results from all of the different methods of data-gathering. A list of the questionnaire responses is in the appendix.

Survey Results

Out of 5,000 ballots that were mailed out, 104 were mailed back to the MBP. The survey results emphasized some of the same concerns that came up in the focus groups, while also uncovering other issues that people did not emphasize in the focus groups and interviews. Particularly interesting is the high number of residents who were discouraged from using Robles Park by safety concerns. In the survey, safety concerns were the most commonly cited reason why residents limited their use of the park. This fear did not come out as strongly in the focus groups or interviews. Perhaps the wider sample led to
different results, or perhaps the neutrality of the survey allowed them to more easily check off safety concerns.

Residents expressed the desire for the park to be a place for activities such as exercise, barbeques, and attending concerts. At the same time, a substantial amount of people stated that they would like to use the park as a place to “relax.” Residents were not extremely excited about the idea of using the park for “water play.” Presumably most did not know about the requirement that the park have a play fountain. Out of 104 surveys, only 31 respondents indicated that they would like to use the park for water play. This is the same amount of people that said that they would like to have gardens in Robles Park, and much less than the amount of people (65) who stated that they would like to use the park for exercising.

The survey appears to be very helpful in giving a quantifiable idea of the prevalence of certain ideas in the Tampa Heights community. The survey also serves to bring about triangulation of the results.

To Summarize: Resident Requests

Considering the findings from the various methodologies, we discover that the most important things to address in the revitalization of Robles park are: safety concerns (through security lighting or even a park ranger) and adequate upkeep (especially cleaning the pond). Residents also noted the utility of the park as a place for walking and exercising, the possibility of using the park as a family or community gathering place, the potential of the park as a central and frequently visited place, and the importance of having a place set aside for children to play.
When the plan was drawn up by an architect, commissioned by the MBP, it included resident suggestions as well as the requirements built into the plan by the F.E. Lykes Foundation. The Tampa Greenprinting Plans have requirements built into them even before residents became involved. Three elements -- a community garden, a water feature, and public art-- were not major demands of the residents, yet they were built into the grant. One adult noted the possibility of putting artwork in the park, and some children independently mentioned the possibility of adding sprinklers or a pool. One child asked for a fountain with a statue inside. Yet, these were nowhere near the most predominant suggestions.

Figure 3: Park Design
It is possible that the 3 necessary improvements might be the only improvements that ever take place at Robles. After all, the $75,000 is only seed money, and residents are expected to raise more funds. Who knows how successful they will be in raising more funds? Regardless, they will probably have to prioritize the changes to be made. It is great to say that communities can become stronger through working together on a park renovation. However, if residents are asked what they want to see in the park, but the plan mainly represents the desires of the person funding the park, the process might backfire. People might be more hesitant to participate in further community building through urban planning projects. It now falls on the shoulders of the Greenprinting Committee to engage all the residents in working together for fund-raising. Hopefully they can agree on what changes, within their power, need to be prioritized.
Chapter Five: Conclusions

We cannot make definitive conclusions about a process that has not concluded (as of this writing). However, I will discuss my impressions about the utility of park revitalization as a route towards community building. In theory, residents were supposed to come together around a project, increasing the “community’s capacity,” or ability, to work together to make change. I must conclude that one park revitalization project cannot smooth over tensions in a gentrifying community such as Tampa Heights. There are much larger issues that must be addressed. However, the park revitalization project may cause an occasion for residents from across the community to begin to interact. Perhaps through this process, they will recognize that to truly build a cohesive community, they must address the implications of gentrification, outside investment (instead of community-rooted investment), the possible demolition of Robles Park Housing Village, and the lack of youth programs in their community.

From my research, park revitalization does not seem to provide a sure route toward the building of social capital within a community. What did, however, surface continuously in the interviews and focus groups was the idea of youth organizations as important to the strengthening of the community. In their envisioning of what type of park they desire, many residents attempted to conceptualize a way that the parks could be used to benefit the youth in the area.
The Need for Youth Programs in Tampa Heights

Many of the residents we interviewed expressed a desire to improve the conditions of the youth in the neighborhood. Although there is a group of young professionals gentrifying the area, many of the youth in the neighborhood live in poverty. Youth in the neighborhood are often exposed to violence. I feel that I can generalize because many of the residents in public housing are children.

During one meeting at Robles Park Public Housing, I witnessed a police chasing what is said to have been a stolen car. Someone fired shots and a helicopter flew over. Children, who had been playing outside, excitedly flocked to the scene of the action. Several adults commented, with annoyance and irony in their voices, that the kids went right to where things were going on instead of staying away. Moments earlier, adult residents of Robles Park housing had asked the Tampa Housing Authority staff members at the meeting what progress had been made in getting bullet proof street-lights. The one bright spot of the meeting was that the Housing Authority’s Youth Services Coordinator discussed the (primarily academically oriented) summer camp for youth. Children were obligated to sign in and stay the whole day, but at the end had opportunities to go to Islands of Adventure and Disney. One adult stated how much fun it had been the year before. A positive thing about public housing seems to be that by people who are impoverished living in one place, they at least seem better able to get access to services than they would be if they were spread out around the city, possibly with no support groups.

The Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association and other programs like it (of which there are none) would theoretically need to “step up to the plate” if public housing is torn
down and youth are left without the organizations they have access to through the Tampa Housing Authority. Currently, the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association tends to consist mainly of youth who do not live in government housing. These children and their parents rely upon the support provided to them by the Tampa Heights Civic Association and other youth organizations. The Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association is the only youth association in Tampa Heights that was originated directly in Tampa Heights. It remains receptive to the needs of the Tampa Heights community. Due to the ending of the Hillsborough County Children Board's funding, the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association is going to be closed down for some time while they look for funds to replace those that the Children’s Board used to provide.

Qualitative data gathered for the Greenprinting Initiative pointed out the need for not only the continuation but the expansion of youth programs. Besides the stated needs of the residents, we also found that the 4 parks tended to be heavily populated by youths, almost always without parents. The fact that youths tend to congregate in parks is problematic if we consider Jane Jacob’s suggestion that parks are not necessarily safe places for youth. Park attendance should not be viewed as a substitute for youth programs.

Even the after school program held at Robles Park, through which we found many of our young interview participants, is not adequate for the needs of Tampa Heights youth. We only observed the presence of adult staff at Calvin Taylor and Robles Park; in both places, staff said they were in need of more help.

In addition, some type of stigma and/or ownership issue is currently associated with Robles Park, which limits the number of youth who utilize the program. For
example, in The Documentation of Daily Life in Tampa Heights (2000), one parent said that she “would like to see the children with their own playground.” When asked, “Is there a playground at Robles Park?” she responded, “Yes, but the people there are kind of like that’s their park.

In addition, even if the recreation center could become more all-encompassing, the recreation center is under funded, understaffed, and does not have the ideology that they are growing the “leaders of tomorrow” (to use a slogan). Instead, as a few of the USF undergraduates I worked with commented, the program seemed more like just a daycare.

There is need to continue programs specifically focused at benefiting youth in Tampa Heights. As one adult interviewed in The Documentation of Daily Life in Tampa Heights stated, “Tampa Heights has many things for the adults of the community to do if they so choose too, but the kids have nothing. If you’re going to make this community better you’re going to have to start from the ground up, and that means from the youngest ones and up.”

Many of the people whom I interviewed wanted to discuss ways that the parks could be used to accommodate children – such as by starting a Boy Scout or Girl Scout camp based at the park. Some adults stated that youth needed a place to go simply so that they would not hang out in the street and cause trouble. Others expressed a desire that youth would be exposed to more opportunities. When I asked about possible community events that could take place in the park, one adult stated that it would be good to have a job fair for youth in the park. I did not specifically ask any of my interview participants about the state of youth and youth organizations. It seems that the adults I talked to in
Tampa Heights have youth on the brain. They know the importance of providing good places for the young residents of their community. The need for additional youth programs was clearly stated by residents in Tampa Heights. However, it is a sad fact that youth programs are not being added to, but are rather being dismantled.

The consequences of the dismantling of youth organizations in Tampa Heights, due to lack of funding, may be widespread. A lot of the data I consulted in the Documentation of Daily Life in Tampa Heights came from interviews with the youth involved in the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association. *The Documentation of Daily Life in Tampa Heights* was largely made possibly through the help of the Junior Civic Association and the adult Civic Association. The concentration of bright, civic-minded youth in one place undoubtedly made for ease in research. The youth interviewed for the aforementioned document also helped conduct interviews with the adults in the community. The youth in the Tampa Heights Civic Association have done a lot for the community of Tampa Heights, and in so doing, a lot for the city of Tampa. It is a shame for Hillsborough County to fail them by cutting off their funding. Their rationale for no longer funding programs that do not seek to help children under the age of eight is laid out in the *2012 Plan* (Children’s Board of Hillsborough County 2002). There are plenty of rebuttals for their argument, which I will not take up in this thesis.

Even if we accept the Children’s Board’s argument that money can best be invested in children under the age of 8 than children over 8, it still seems that there still could have been a place left or funds set aside for youth associations that were specifically grown out of economically impoverished communities. Even after the Children’s Board of Hillsborough County changed their focus, there were still talks
between the Children’s Board and the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association president. One official at the Board implied that there was still hope that the Tampa Heights Junior Civic Association could still get funding from the Children’s Board as a sort of exceptional case. These conversations, however, were not put into writing. What is significant is that the residents desire to provide programs (such as boy scouts/girl scouts) that encourage the building of social capital. They also focused on children who may otherwise walk around the streets, getting into trouble, without the structure of a youth program. It seems that they intend these programs and activities (job fairs for example) for youth who are significantly over the age of eight. Children under the age of eight are not as likely to walk the streets and get into trouble as preteens and teens may be.

Conclusions about Resident Involvement throughout the Process

The lack of full community participation showed up in the beginning of the project, when all of the blocks except for Robles had block captains. Most of the Greenprinting meeting attendees were White adults, even though the neighborhood is 58% Black and youth make up at least 36% of the total population.

Residents were not sufficiently told about the meetings, since ads did not get in the paper. The MBP implemented a block captain system, where block captains put flyers in mailboxes, but volunteers did not always pass out flyers as they had promised. Robles Park housing residents never even had a block captain. If possible, strategies should be tailored to the specific neighborhood, but since this is not always feasible, strategies like posting flyers, asking people at various community gatherings to make a brief announcement about the meetings, or even having an announcement on City of
Tampa Television (CTTV) might work. There are many strategies for getting notices out to the public. The lesson here is that when attempting to provoke community building activities, the dissemination of information to residents should be placed at high priority.

It also seems that there may have been deeper issues in place, such as the role of Robles Park Village residents in the process. The former director of programs had difficulty in getting the Robles Park public housing residents involved. On several occasions, she stated that she was hesitant to involve Robles Park Housing residents without permission from the Tampa Housing Authority. Explicit permission was eventually secured. A Tampa Housing Authority representative was even there when we presented plans to the residents at one of the Robles Park resident meetings in June 2004.

The new director/coordinator spoke about the plans for park revitalization at a resident meeting in June 2004. Her purpose for the meeting was to make sure that the plan “reflects the character and aspirations of people there” before the June 12, 2004 unveiling of the “concept plan.” She talked about the plan, using the plan for visual illustration. She stressed the changes that I had emphasized in my report to the Mayor’s Beautification Program. These changes included: the importance of improving the drainage and smell, of the park; leaving an open space for kids to jump rope or engage in other activities; and paying attention to security issues. The security issue was also strongly reflected in the surveys, she said.

When Jennifer asked for comments, one male resident said “sounds good,” in a tone that suggested that he approved but was ready to move to another topic. One woman wanted to know “when does it start.” These two comments show that the residents did not view the plan as something they had actively designed. Instead, it was
almost as if the park improvement was something that the city was doing for them. After Jennifer’s presentation of the plan, the residents asked the official from the housing authority when they would be getting new street lights, and whether they would be bullet proof. (The official said it was impossible to make the lights “bullet proof,” but he was working on getting lights that were bullet “resistant”.)

The message that the MBP did not feel like residents could really decide the destiny of the park, but rather needed to rely on experts, was communicated when the MBP scheduled an 8:00 AM Saturday charrette workshop for park planning, but told residents to come after the plans were already drawn. Residents were not invited to the park design workshop as active participants. The announcement in the newspaper called for their participation in the late afternoon, after architects and Parks and Recreation employees had put together park designs. Only one resident was included on the panel of 4 judges, although residents know things about the park that people outside of the neighborhood do not. For example, one judge thought that the noise from the traffic was a huge concern, but a resident who had used the park throughout her childhood and takes her child there today said that “The noise is not a problem once you get inside the park.” She had other concerns, such as park smell and security.

Although the park design vote was not binding, more residents could have been included on the panel. Despite the best intentions, if residents from all socio-economic brackets are not included, the result could be divisive rather than community-building. It remains to be seen whether the Greenprinting Committee can involve the whole community so that residents not only participate in the process but lead it.
Asset Mapping and Community Mobilizing

Residents were also not actively involved in asset mapping, even though this methodology is theoretically a tool for community empowerment. The asset mapping basically consisted of maps showing the relations of the parks to various assets. These maps were corrected through a GIS (Geographical Information Systems) program. The FCCDR presented maps for those assets and indicators under the headings (below) of “Completed Thus Far” and “To be completed this week and reviewed by citizens and students.”

The list below is an excerpt of an e-mail that a FCCDR researcher sent to participants of the Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative.

**Completed Thus Far:**
Land Use/Land Cover
Families With Children
% Homeowners
Total Population
Population Density
Population Over 60 yrs old
Schools and Libraries

**To be completed this week and reviewed by citizens and students:**
Licensed Child Care Facilities
Grocery Stores
Places of Worship
Family Practices

**Maps or Ideas Suggested that we do not have data for:**
Detailed Maps of all of the Parks
Usage Statistics for all of the parks
Sidewalks and Lighting Around all of the Parks
Recreation Centers
Community Services
Park History
Suggestions Made by citizens that are not being mapped at this time (if you would like to include these or have any questions please feel free to contact me):

Government Buildings
Rainfall Data
Open Space (This is part of the land use maps we have already created)
Greenways along major highways
Crime Data (The sociological implications of mapping this without proper conceptualization could, potentially, be negative. Therefore, given the scope of this project we have chosen to omit this.)

[e-mail to author, September 24, 2003]

As we see from the researcher’s comments, The FCCDR did not map all the information requested, but rather felt the need to be somewhat selective in the information (specifically in regards to crime) that they presented to the residents. Since the community did not play a central role in the asset mapping exercise, it is my opinion that the Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative cannot be looked at as a successful example of the use of community asset mapping. According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), asset mapping is a process that a neighborhood undertakes in order to take stock of what assets they may use in the strengthening of their community. Asset mapping is meant to provide communities with a central place in controlling their own destinies. Kretzmann and McKnight write, “Clearly a community which has mobilized its internal assets is no longer content to be a recipient of charity. Rather, this mobilized community offers opportunities for real partnerships” (Kretzmann et al 1993: 354). Through asset mapping, community members may obtain a clearer picture of the resources they have at their disposal and an idea of where the funds can be directed most efficiently.
Kretzmann and McKnight explain that after the assets of community members, local citizen organizations, and local institutions have been identified, linkages should be made between the groups. They discuss collaborations between local organizations and local institutions. The difference between local citizen organizations and local institutions is that local organizations are made up of and controlled by community members, whereas local institutions are controlled by the outside (parks, schools, etc.). The authors mention that partnerships between communities and schools have tended to be particularly fruitful.

I did not see Kretzmann and McKnight’s ideology in action. They envision asset mapping as something the community elects to do on their own. In this case, the Florida Center for Community Design and Research (FCCD&R) was already experts in asset mapping and already had an idea of what to map. The researchers at FCCD&R did ask residents for their input, but this resident input was tacked onto a pre-existing format. In addition, residents were not always presented with the statistics they wanted. An example is that Lena Young Green did not get the statistics of youth by block that we had asked for.

Impediments to Partnerships between Communities and Outside Institutions

The e-mail above illustrates one possible impediment to both universities and communities getting what they want out of their partnership university-community partnerships. Some researchers may, for practical reasons, not wish to uncover actual social problems that might go beyond the scope of the project.
Another problem possibly indicative of deeper issues is the lack of a truly representative population of residents at the meetings. Even after several undergraduate communications students went to the Robles Park Village to pass out flyers, none of the people to whom they passed out flyers came to the meeting that night. It sounds nice to go into an economically impoverished community and help them revitalize a park, but the reality is that it might be harder to gain community support when (1) the revitalization was not their idea and (2) they might have other priorities, like getting their children shoes without holes. In two separate focus groups, youth stated that a lot of kids in their neighborhood could use shoes, since they walked around with holes in their shoes.

As Lena Young Green related to me, “You have a whole segment of the population who feel disconnected … People who, when they get up in the morning, their focus is on just getting food on the table and keeping shelter over their heads. So to ask them about a park is like, you know, the last thing on their interest and their agenda. So the challenge is getting that group involved… as stakeholders in this project.” Ideally, university members should simply assist community residents in carrying out community-designed initiatives. This case is interesting because there was a group of residents (the Tampa Heights Civic Association) who actively sought to have their neighborhood be a part of this project, but there were many more others who were not even aware of it.

The new Greenprinting Coordinator made a special effort to reach out to residents at the public housing by the park. Still, she did not get many suggestions. Part of the reason for the lack of attention may have been that the plans were already drawn up by this time. The previous coordinator had taken a long time to get clearance from the
Housing Authority to involve residents. Therefore, the plan was already drawn by the time the Mayor’s Beautification Program started to specifically go into the public housing village and involve the residents. Although the coordinator’s intention was to reach out to residents, the way to do so does not seem to be to present a carefully drawn out plan to residents. As long as the plan is not completely objectionable, residents may simply be impressed by what the “experts” have planned for their park. Even if the community says “oh isn’t that nice,” they may also have the idea reinforced that it is experts outside of their community who know best how to revitalize their community. What is the probability of residents working together for park-upkeep if they did not actively participate in the parks’ coming to be? The residents nearest to the park, for the most part, did not come to meetings. This is one of the reasons why I went to peoples’ doors to briefly interview them and let them know about the meetings.

Through my research, I tried to involve the residents I could in the time that I had. Had there been more time, I could have employed additional strategies. There are a variety of ways that ethnographers can involve community members through the research process. Community members are sometimes taught how to conduct research. McLaughlin writes of her research with Shirley Brice Heath, where they sent a team of “junior ethnographers” (youth) to record important data using a tape recorder. Even if not at this level, the charrette workshop would have been a good opportunity for community members to work together with the architecture students, truly collaborating and learning from each other. However, residents were not invited to these workshops. There were 2 residents there, and they were there because they were affiliated with either the University or the Civic Association.
The newspaper advertisement called for residents to come to a festival in the late afternoon, after the blueprints had already been generated. Even if residents had been invited to the “charrette workshops,” the very time of the workshops made it very unlikely that residents would have shown up. The workshops started at 8:00 am on a Saturday morning. At the beginning of the charrette workshop for park design, I presented my findings to the architect students and park and recreation experts on what the residents wanted to see in the park. They then generated several blueprints. The residents came in the afternoon, mingled, ate, and then watched as the panel voted on the park design they liked the most. This panel was made up of the head of the Tampa Heights Civic Association, a politician, an architecture expert, and the funder of the project. I suggested to the MBP that they at least involve more residents in voting on park design in later initiatives. While nonprofit organizations have very real obligations to reach out to incorporate their stakeholders, such as politicians and philanthropic institutes, residents are also stakeholders who should not be forgotten. I argue that they should be given special consideration if the project is to build community among residents.

The Park Planning Workshop was one event where adult members of the Tampa Heights Community who were not at previous meetings were involved, and several community members made important comments. The setup of their involvement, however, was not indicative of a partnership. The MBP invited residents who live near Robles Park to a community gathering regarding park selection through an ad in the Tampa Tribune. The MBP’s uncertainty over how much of a role residents are to play in the park revitalization is reflected in the article:
Residents to Choose Robles Park Design
TAMPA- The Mayor’s Beautification Program invites residents who live near Robles Park to attend a community program Saturday where three potential park plans will be unveiled. Architecture students from the University of South Florida, with park designers and community residents, will design concept plans during the program to improve the park. Judges from the community, design professionals and city officials will choose a plan to redevelop the park. The event is from noon to 3 p.m. Hot dogs and chips will be served to the first 200 people who attend. The Mayor’s Beautification Program, a private, nonprofit organization, helps restore inner city parks through fundraising and grant money from the F.E. Lykes Foundation. The plan is to select a park for redevelopment each year for 10 years. Robles is the second park selected. For information, call Jennifer Sterling at (813) 221-8733. (Kinsler 2004: 1)

It appears as if the MBP is very aware of its major stakeholders from outside of the community, but it seems as if they struggled with the idea of how to include the residents while nodding to the other stakeholders. The result was that architecture students and 2 community members planned the design, and then the city and design officials, the funder, and the head of the Tampa Heights Civic Association briefly stopped in to vote on a map. The city officials, designer, and project funder were not involved in the workshop where the plans were drawn up.

The headline reads, “Residents to Choose Robles Park Design,” but the first sentence states that the residents who live near Robles park are invited to the unveiling of the plans. “Architecture students from the University of South Florida, with park designers and community residents” were to design the plan, but there were only 2 community residents present at the workshop, which began at 8, not noon as in the advertisement.

The panel of judges that the article mentions only had one community member, and the other judges were: the philanthropist who provided the money for the project, a designer, and a city official. The headline does not say “Stakeholders to Choose Robles
Park Design,” which would be more accurate. It sounds better to say that residents are invited to choose the design, but this is not exactly what happened. One resident was on the judging panel. This resident was Ralph Schuler, then the president of the Tampa Heights Civic Association. Residents could truly be said to choose park design if they were invited to the early workshop and made up a bigger proportion of the judging panel. The residents’ desires were somewhat voiced by me, but it might have been more useful to have actual residents from throughout the neighborhood involved to comment on the specifics in the “blueprints.”

The Role of the Civic Association

The fact that the one resident present on the judging panel was a Civic Association member was not a coincidence. The Civic Association acted as a representative body for the residents of Tampa Heights. They brought the Greenprinting Initiative to Tampa Heights. They also initiated the Tampa Heights Plan in 1999. This plan ended up being representative of the entire Tampa Heights community, but not without conflict. As previously stated, the Tampa Heights Citizen Advisory Committee, made up of the Civic Association members, community leaders, and other residents, originally had written that they wanted to end public housing in their neighborhood. Public housing residents joined in the discussion when they found out that the community planned to get rid of public housing. As a result, the neighborhood was ultimately able to work out a plan that represented the wishes of the whole community. We may arrive at some insights from considering the role of the Tampa Heights Civic Association in promoting community change.
Conflict may serve to keep a community communicating, which seems especially important in a community like Tampa Heights, where there are potential issues of disenfranchisement. Controversy may have also served to strengthen the Tampa Heights Civic Association. Gordon writes that “conflict can play a major role in creating and sustaining a block association” (224). Without controversy, a neighborhood association may eventually peter out. Conflict can keep an organization relevant.

By acting as leaders in the Tampa Heights Plan and the Tampa Heights Greenprinting Committee, the Civic Association presumably acts to augment its power. They often are in the position of speaking for Tampa Heights, even though they are not a representative sample of all the segments of the Tampa Heights population. During the interviews for The Documentation of Daily Life in Tampa Heights, the project director of the Youth Opportunity Movement was asked “Who provides the voice for residents?” He responded, “The Tampa Heights Civic Association.”

Gordon speaks of the power that neighborhood associations may amass by acting as the voice of the neighborhood: “As increasingly credible representatives of neighborhood concerns, however unrepresentative they may actually be of the residents, block associations have acquired access to politically powerful people and institutions, especially when they form coalitions” (225). The Civic Association’s participation in the Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative appears to be a move that could add to the publicity and the power of the Civic Association. Civic Association members visibly facilitated the community festival where the Robles Park plan was ceremonially unveiled by the mayor of Tampa. A Civic Association member welcomed the crowd from the stage, and the Civic Association President introduced the mayor. Other Tampa Heights
residents, such as those from Robles housing, performed interpretive dances, but they did not have “speaking roles.” The Civic Association members served leading roles in the Greenprinting committee and other Tampa Heights Initiatives. Their presiding over the community festival, where they were present on the stage with the mayor and other officials, seems to fit strategically into their attempts to increase their political power.

Tampa Heights had already had disagreements in the past. Thus, it was especially important (in my mind and that of my supervisor) to make sure to include all members and not to alienate anyone. Identifying stakeholders is always important when changes are made that could affect communities (Bernal 35). Stakeholders are not just the people who fund the project and the city. They are also the residents themselves, whose involvement may determine the sustainability of the project. In this project, the major stakeholders were the residents. The Greenprinting Process was designed to build community. In Seminole Heights, the neighborhood had already come together on other issues, such as ending prostitution on Nebraska Avenue, before they started the renovation of Giddens Park (Jones, lecture, Dec.2, 2003).

To the credit of the Tampa Heights Civic Association, they did enact measures intended to make sure that the project would be community building rather than divisive. They had to insist to the Mayor’s Beautification Program at the beginning of the process that there be a process put in place for democratically selecting one park of the four. Reflecting back on the intention of the Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative, Lena Young Green says, “We were so careful about not allowing any one thing to come and divide us, when already it is hard to have a poor and upper income, minorities, whites, Hispanics, people with different lifestyles, all the things that make up Tampa Heights…”
 Older citizens, younger citizens….We already have divisive issues so we weren’t going to allow any project to come into the community that would cause any more division. Anything that came in, our commitment had been that it would be something that brings the community together. So in those ways I think we forced the Greenprinting system to take a different approach and we insisted on that at several meetings in order for them to understand that we weren’t going to sit there and let that happen.”

It seems that the Mayor’s Beautification Program did not have the same concept of the importance of involving all residents. Perhaps the MBP tried too much to please the city and philanthropic stakeholders instead of giving more freedom and encouraging more involvement and autonomy from the residents, who could have guided the whole process more. Here I am speaking especially of the community workshop where the plan was designed. It is straightforward to get the funder to come out for a community charette, since they have already bought into the project. These stakeholders do not need as much nourishment as the community, who must feel as if they are the guides of this project. This is especially so since the bringing of the Greenprinting Initiative to Tampa Heights was primarily the work of a small group of residents. It would seem that if this project was to be truly resident driven, the residents should be treated as the main stakeholders. It does not seem to work to start a project that should build community but then never turn it over to the residents. This is likely to result in another park that falls into disrepair. Another aspect is that community members (especially outside of the Civic Association) may not be used to being consulted. They may be used to having “experts” and “professionals” set the rules instead of having the experts turn to them and ask what changes they want to be made.
As stated before, the task of building community is already complicated by the fact that this program is originated from the outside. Community members who are not involved closely with politics may be used to the effects of policies originated from the outside. This is especially true for public housing residents, whose very place of living is controlled by the government. They are likely aware of the destruction of nearby housing projects, and know that theirs is probably being considered for the next demolition. They are not used to being handed over power, and in fact the Housing Authority is said to have previously objected when residents of Robles Park Village noted in the Tampa Heights Plan that they would like to have ownership of their property eventually.

While the Mayor’s Beautification Program is non-governmental, it is possible that it can represent to some residents another group that comes and tells them what is good for their neighborhood. In fact, through their name they appear to align themselves with the government. Names are not everything, nor the biggest problem in this project, but it begs to question whether the program would be run differently as well as perceived differently by the residents if it was named “The Resident’s Beautification Program” or another title noting its allegiance with the community members. Plus, the very name could serve as a tangible, brief reminder that goal of the organization is to involve the residents. The government has, on the other hand, imposed policies (such as code enforcement) that have caused residents in Tampa harm. In choosing to align themselves with the government, perhaps the MBP takes on some of the distancing and reputation of the government. A name such as the “Mayor’s Beautification Program” may earn respect but at the same time may distance itself from the residents. If a program is to be not only accessible but driven by the residents, they cannot be intimidated. Speaking from a
practical aspect, the project was to be “resident-driven.” Even when the MBP managed to get the word out to residents, they still weren’t given the “keys to the car.” It’s important not only to talk to residents but to also hand them over some of the power to make decisions.

Looking Towards the Future

When considering this initiative, we are faced with the questions: Can park renovation work to build community among a diverse and gentrifying area? Is park renovation only a symbolic activity that will not prevent the eventual displacement of the poorer residents? Can park renovation/revitalization actually help to indirectly push poorer residents out of the community? As stated before, a major goal of the Mayor’s Beautification Program’s Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative is to build community. Their slogans include, “Growing Tampa’s neighborhoods from the Grassroots Up” and “Together We’re Growing a Community (Appendix).” I have addressed part of the answer to this question. One requirement for building community among a diverse area is that all participants be included. If all residents are not included, the initiative might even promote divisiveness.

The same councilperson who stated that Tampa Heights would be the next Hyde Park of Tampa also said that West Tampa and Tampa Heights will “maintain their identities” (Girona 2003). He has stated various times that the residents of Tampa Heights are largely responsible for the revitalization of the area:
“It took a resurgence of the residents of the community to get the ball rolling …Once they did that, city government came in to assist them” (qtd. in Girona 2003).

But the question is – can residents truly experience the changes they make to a neighborhood if the neighborhood gets too expensive for them? There are plans to build houses in Tampa Heights that will send from 75,000 to 100,000 through an “affordable homes program” (Girona 2003). However, even if this plan goes through, residents are not promised to partake of this success if there are no written guarantees that residents, especially renters, will not be pushed out of their apartments by higher prices if the land is needed for building more lucrative businesses. Currently I am aware of no written documents prohibiting landlords from raising their rent (directly or indirectly affected by revitalization through taxes or even outright offers to buy the land). We will not even get into the question of eminent domain, where a city can take over a persons’ land if it interferes with their plans.

How does park renovation fit into the gentrification puzzle? I pondered this while I was at the unveiling ceremony for the Robles park plan, beset by irony and a sense of unease. What would this community look like years from now? Hip-hop, R&B and Gospel music played, and a group of youth from Robles Park Village performed dances to a few songs. There were some young, white professionals milling around or pushing strollers. The crowd was very diverse. Still, all of the performers on the stage were black. All of the residents who crossed the stage, except for one, were ethnic minorities. A few White yuppies attended the event, but by and large the face of the event was young and black. It is also fair to say that many of the residents at the event were impoverished,
since there was a sizeable group from Robles Park Village. As we consider the current trend of the neighborhood – the many economic changes, growth, and building that the neighborhood is going through -- will the young, Black residents who took the forefront of this celebration eventually be pushed out? Can park renovation work towards neighborhood cohesion? Also, if lower income and/or public housing residents get more involved in park revitalization, will they be working towards fixing a park that they will not be able to enjoy years from now?

As a councilman stated in the previously mentioned article, “In the next five years, you won’t recognize Tampa Heights from what it is today” (Girona April 2003). Before this, in 2002, then Mayor Dick Greco communicated the same message. Kinsler and Steele write “He [Greco] loves to drive people through the neighborhood of 8,500 residents. He tells everyone, ‘You won’t recognize this area in five years.’ His words, once like a pipe dream, now sound prophetic” (Kinsler and Steele 2002). One cannot help but wonder if part of the difference will consist of a change in the ethnic and socioeconomic make-up of the community, although the councilperson presumably did not intend for us to think in that way. Will the faces we see when we ride down the streets of Tampa Heights change in 5 years? We must consider these hidden implications.

My skeptical side leads me to think that the community sentiments and appreciation for diversity put on the forefront during the unveiling of the park plan were not a harbinger of things to come. To be fair, there is still more work to be done with the Greenprinting effort, so there is a chance that the process could build community. The ethnic composition of the community festival leads one to think that, if they continue the
momentum, there is a possibility of a diverse group of residents coming together around this project. The park may even add to the cultural foundation and identity of the community. The current head of the Tampa Heights Civic Association expressed this hope while giving a brief speech at the podium: “This park will be a centerpiece and point of pride not just for Tampa Heights but the city as a whole. We still have work to do and I urge you to stay involved and work together to make this place a reality”.

Economic pressures may make it impossible for residents to stay in the neighborhood as their property becomes more valuable. By working together, it is possible for communities to develop the “community capacity” and social connections to make change that goes beyond the scope of the current project. However, from my observations, it seems that park renovation is not a direct route to community cohesion in a gentrifying area such as Tampa Heights. There are so many underlying issues to be tackled.

To start, park renovation could work against community building if all groups of segments are not included. Difficulties in gaining access to involve housing residents in the revitalization may be indicative of deeper problems in the public housing system.

Furthermore, some Tampa Heights residents are even resistant to the continued existence of poor residents in their neighborhood. Enough people shared this belief that the writers of the Tampa Heights Plan originally had the goal of getting public housing out of their community (Behnken 2002:1). Who is to say that they have changed their minds on this issue? If the residents who originally sought to get public housing out of their neighborhood have not changed their ideology, and they are able to strengthen their community capacity to make change, park renovation could eventually lead to the
displacement of public housing residents. There is even the question of whether beautification issues will be linked with an excuse to get public housing out of the community. Robles Park public housing is right next to Robles the Park. Who is to say that people will not use the existence of a nice, newly revitalized park next to public housing as an excuse to try to “move” the public housing to a more agreeable spot in the city? This is why it is especially important to involve public housing residents, longtime Tampa Heights residents, and newcomers in the Greenprinting process.

Another issue is the way that park renovation might intersect with homelessness. We have already considered the ways in which parks and beautification have separately been related to homelessness and political conflict in general. In addition, Robles Park is said to have a problem with homelessness. I never observed a homeless person at Robles Park, although I did observe an apparently homeless man sleeping at Plymouth Park. At the community festival celebrating the unveiling of the plan for park revitalization, one police officer on hand said, “‘we’ve got a lot of problems with the homeless… so when they said Robles I said ‘oh no’.

Currently, these issues are not being addressed. I doubt that they want to address these issues at this time, since their main focus is on the potential of parks to promote community building. The director of the MBP is aware that Robles Park is popular with homeless people, but states that I probably never noticed anyone sleeping in the park because “they pack up and leave” in the early mornings, long before I arrived. For park revitalization to truly end in a stronger, more integrated neighborhood, it will be necessary for residents to address issues like gentrification, economics, homelessness, and public housing.
It sounds difficult, but this type of conscientious park revitalization has been attempted previously. Marsh-Briggs and Warren write of the Lafayette Square Park revitalization, where, “early in this process, a serious commitment was made not to displace the disenfranchised population that claimed this park as home during the years of neglect. Everyone is welcome. Standards of behavior are set and will be monitored not only by law enforcement but also by neighbors and users of the park” (2000: 253).

If undertaken in light of all of the possible problems, it is possible that park renovation can be used in a positive way. The mingling of various ethnicities and economic brackets might lead to residents expanding their ideas of who their neighbors are. This expansion may lead to the building of community. If the people who work towards park renovation are representative of the Tampa Heights neighborhood, it is possible that residents of Tampa Heights can be successful in extending ties across boundaries of age, ethnicity, and income level.

The challenge is to make sure that social capital is not only increased among a small group of residents, such as the newcomers who are gentrifying the area, but throughout the neighborhood. The Greenprinting Committee may find themselves having to work harder at attracting residents from throughout Tampa Heights. If residents from all of Tampa Heights get involved, they can increase the social capital of Tampa Heights as a whole, making Tampa Heights a place where people appreciate physical assets (such as historic residences, a beautiful park, etc.), but also a place where residents enjoy a strong sense of community.
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Appendix A: Park Observation Form

Instructions: Please complete form as accurately as possible by noting all of your observations. It is recommended that each observation take place at each park for one hour (minimum).

The four parks include: Calvin Taylor Playground - 611 W.Indiana Ave.

Plymouth Playground – 3100 Ola Ave.

Robles Park – 3305 Avon Ave.

Morgan St. Park – 2105 N. Morgan St.

Your name:______________________________

Park Name: _____________________________ Date of survey:_________ Time Started: ___________ Time Ended: _________

Weather: ____________________________________________________________________________

1. Number of people using the park

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teenagers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly</td>
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2. Types of activities you are observing (please use tally mark to indicate number of people doing each activity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Picnic/barbeque</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>observation/reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party or gathering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog walking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking w/stroller</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running/rollerblading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playground</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness stations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball/softball</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation Department activity (led by staff person)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
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Appendix B: Observation Data

Morgan Street Park Activities

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<th>Time</th>
<th># of people</th>
<th>Dog walking</th>
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<th>playground</th>
<th>baseball</th>
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Morgan Street Park Age groups

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<th>Time</th>
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<th>Teenagers</th>
<th>Adults</th>
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Calvin Taylor Playground Age Groups

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<th>Time</th>
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Calvin Taylor Playground Activities

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### Plymouth Playground Age Groups

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<th>Time</th>
<th># of people</th>
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### Plymouth Playground Activities

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### Robles Park Age Groups

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## Appendix D: Results of Park Inventory

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<th>Camp John Park</th>
<th>Park</th>
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<td>8.4%</td>
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<td>Walking radius (miles)</td>
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### Appendix D: Results of Park Inventory (continued)

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<th>Park</th>
<th>Parking</th>
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<td>Formal Baseball/Softball</td>
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### Notes

- The table above provides a detailed comparison of various amenities across different municipal parks.
- Each park is evaluated based on its expected city investment, parking area, fitness course, paved walkways, fitness equipment, large play structure, playground swing sets, beaches, BBQ grills, drinking fountains, formal baseball/softball, percent of shade trees, benches, trash cans, restrooms, storage, and bike rack.
- The percentage of shade trees is categorized into three ranges: 30-50%, 50-60%, and 60-70%.
- The table highlights the presence of amenities such as parking areas, fitness courses, and playgrounds among other features.

### References


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**134**
Appendix E: Informal Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions to Ask People Whom You Encounter in Parks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are you a Tampa Heights resident?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How often do you use this park?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do you get to this park? (Bus, car, walk?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What kinds of activities do you do at the park?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What is your general assessment of the park/what do you generally think about the park? (Likes, dislikes…)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Do you know about the Greenprinting Initiative meetings (at Sacred Heart, Tuesdays, 7 pm)?</td>
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Appendix F: Park Survey

Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative Survey: Robles Park

1.) How many children and adults are in your household? Please write a number next to each age group.

__0-5 yr. olds __6-10 yr. olds __11-14 yr. olds __15-20 yr. olds __21-54 yr. olds __55+ up

2.) How often do you/your family use Robles Park? Please check.
__ Never  __ Special occasions  ___ Once/week ___ 2-6 times/week ___ Daily

3.) If you don’t use Robles Park, why not? Please check all that apply.
__ Bathroom facilities  ___ Don’t have time  ___ Inadequate Equipment  ___ Nothing interesting going on there  ___ Safety concerns  ___ Park not clean enough  ___ No programmed activities

4.) Which activities do you or would you/your family like to do in Robles Park?
___ Organized Sports  __ Informal play  __ Picnic/BBQ  ___ Relax  
__ Attend concerts  ___ Exercise stations  ____ Community parties  
___ Family gatherings  ____ Fish  ___ Water play
__ League sports

5.) What do you think needs to be added or improved in Robles Park?
___ Better lighting ___ Picnic tables ___ Trash cans  
___ More play equipment ___ More benches ___ Fence
___ BBQ grills ___ Sports equipment rental
___ Increased Supervision ___ Drinking fountain ___ Concession stand
____ Flowers/Landscaping ___ Upgraded building ___ Pond
___ Play fountain

6.) If you would like to tell us more or get involved in revitalizing Robles Park, please provide your name and contact information.
Name ___________________________ Phone# _______________________
Mailing address: _______________________________________________
E-mail: __________________________________

Thanks so much for taking the time to fill out this survey!!
Appendix G: Questionnaires distributed to Civic Association

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<td>1.</td>
<td>Are you a Tampa Heights resident?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>How often do you use Robles Park?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>What kinds of activities do you do at the park?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>What do you generally think about Robles park? (Likes, dislikes…)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>What improvements does the park need?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Do you know about the Greenprinting Initiative meetings?</td>
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Appendix H: Focus Group Questions

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>What did you do the last time you were at this park?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Who do you usually go to the park with?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>What kinds of outdoor activities do you like to do with your friends?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Would you like your family to come here with you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>What activities would you like to do with your family?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>What neighborhood events would you like to do here? (If they need prompting: like fairs, concerts, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>What was the best park you’ve ever visited? What did you like about it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Now, let’s list your likes and your dislikes about this park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>What improvements could we do to make Robles Park a really good park?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>So to summarize, you think that…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Is there anything we left out?</td>
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Appendix I: Meeting Addendum

Meeting Addendum
9/16/03

Goals and Objectives of Tampa’s Greenprinting Initiative

As a park revitalization and capacity building process, the overall goal of TGI is to revitalize ten inner-city parks in ten years, working closely with the residents in each neighborhood to ensure two things:
1) that the resulting park revitalization addresses their prioritized needs and wants in terms of greatest impact of invested dollars and ultimate use of the park by neighborhood residents, and;
2) that through the process of assessing needs, prioritizing those needs, visioning for improvements, planning, fundraising, volunteer recruitment and construction, each participating neighborhood builds the skills — both activity-based and people-based — they need to continue pursuing their neighborhood’s re-development, be it continued open space re-development or any other community development issue they choose to address.

The intent of TGI is to revitalize 10 parks in 10 years to the extent that Kate Jackson Park in Hyde Park was revitalized. The results for the Hyde Park neighborhood of the Kate Jackson Park are numerous —
• It is now a community gathering place and is linked to the identity of the Hyde Park neighborhood,
• It serves as an award-winning state-wide model of best practices in open space revitalization,
• It provides a safe and healthy environment for youth — not just in the neighborhood but also throughout the City,
• By revitalizing the park, the neighborhood was able to attract more than $1 million in City funding to construct a community center,
• Property values in the blocks surrounding the park have increased as a result of the revitalization.

By diluting the efforts of the Tampa Heights Greenprinting Committee, as well as the seed funding and any leveraged funding raised, the possibility of reaping such benefits for the Tampa Heights neighborhood is significantly reduced.

Throughout the City of Tampa, public open spaces and parks reflect the reality of spreading too few dollars too thin. With more than 325 parks and a budget that has not grown proportionately with the increase in park acreage, the level of maintenance services and funding for capital improvements in parks and open spaces citywide is minimal and often inadequate. The proposed dilution of TGI efforts and funding in Tampa Heights, while more equitable at the first glance, holds the nearly definite possibility of replicating the problems of two few dollars spread too thin on a neighborhood level and, what could hold the possibility of a significant impact, would disappear into short-term improvements with little noticeable impact.

Neighborhood capacity building is such an important part of TGI — it transforms the initiative from a beautification project into a meaningful community re-development tool. By spreading the dollars around to several open spaces, the possibility of working through this issue with neighborhood residents through consensus building and decision-making based on quantifiable
data is lost. Consensus building will not be easy, we recognize that, but it will be a valuable process for Tampa Heights to work through, as the diversity of your neighborhood bodes for many similar scenarios to develop in your efforts to implement your neighborhood plan.

For TGI to be successful in the Tampa Heights neighborhood, we need the leadership of the neighborhood to be working to build consensus, resident involvement and support. The Mayor’s Beautification Program has been working toward that goal since March, when we began looking at all of Tampa Heights’ parks with neighborhood residents attending Greenprinting meetings to narrow the choice down to a shortlist of four, from which one will ultimately be chosen.

Information is currently being gathered to help residents make that choice, including:

- Census data and maps showing population density, land use, and nearby youth serving institutions such as day care centers, after school programs and schools to identify where high probability of park use exists and the greatest impact can be realized;
- Needs assessments based on park amenity inventory and quality and;
- Observations of park use and the demographics of users.

TGI holds the possibility of being a quickly-won success for the Tampa Heights neighborhood – 18 months is a drop in the bucket compared with the 7 years it took Hyde Park residents to revitalize Kate Jackson Park. By ending that 18-months with a park that can be a true center of the Tampa Heights community and can generate additional public and private support for other initiatives, everybody wins — Tampa Heights residents who will have a high-quality neighborhood park in walking or biking distance of their homes, the Tampa Heights neighborhood has a success under their belt in the implementation of their neighborhood plan, and Tampa’s Greenprinting Initiative will have the 2nd of 10 parks required by the program successfully completed.

(Written by Raina O’ Neil, former coordinator for MBP)
Appendix J: Focus Group Results from Robles Park Community Center

Cleaning/Maintenance Improvements
Clean up pond
Garbage cans
Pest control

Building projects
Parking
Build a gym
Renovate recreation center – new tiles, bigger windows, fans (very popular request)
Computer room
Build a pool (very popular request)
Build football field
Fix baseball field
Better basketball courts; Sheltered basketball courts
‘Fountain with statue for little kids to play in’
Open bathrooms (very popular request)
Add an arts & crafts area
Computer room

Additional Items Requested
New equipment
Computers
Tire swing
Better lighting
More and newer benches
New foosball table
Soda machines
Water fountains
Additional staff, someone to supervise pond area
Fence around pond
Exercise stations; Mile posts for walking and running*
Pavillion
Gate or fence

Aesthetic changes
Landscaping*
Statues of notable persons from Tampa*
Fountain in pond
Murals painted by Tampa Heights residents*
Bridge across pond

Community Events
Sporting events (like tournaments)
Concerts
Fairs
Races
Choir
Fairs, Dances, parties, barbeques
Job fairs at the park
“A day in the park” for family and residents

Priorities: Clean pond, add bathrooms
*Staff requested these changes
Appendix K: Focus Group Results from Private School by the Park

Cleaning/Maintenance Improvements
Make pond water clearer

Building projects
Parking lot improvements
Want gym built
Need main office on site
Weight room
Make basketball court bigger
Arts & crafts room
Computer room
Pool with admission fee
Gym: Gym floor that opens up into a pool
Windows inside of the gym
Place with shelter for adults to sit down and have coffee and conference
Bigger kitchen
Playhouse
New basketball court and football field
Make recreation center bigger

Additional Items Requested
Pool or bumper pool
Add nets to basketball hoops
Playground swings
Merry go rounds
Soda machine
Snack machine
X box, game cube, ps2
Water slide by pool
3 big screens
Comfortable chairs
Microwave in recreation center
Put in a new pool table

Aesthetic changes
More water in pond
More fish
Bigger sign in front of the park
National flags
Bridge over pond
“Flowers and grass, not just dirt”
Community Events/ Fundraising Activities
Cheerleading class, cheerleading squad
Pep squad
Fun Friday – parties, table full of goodies
Holiday parties, fundraiser
Fried chicken sale to raise money
Camping trips, field trips in park
Carnivals with ferris wheel, roller coasters, knocking over bottles, horseshoes
Salsa dancing
Driver’s education course
Community services
Stage for talent shows
Race 4 wheelers
Tutorial program with volunteers
Reading classes, spelling classes
Talent shows
Fashion show
Spelling bees
Football tournaments

Use of space
“Cut down the trees so there can be a big field”
Soccer
Jump rope
Dog park or area for dogs to play

Miscellaneous
Piano lessons
Dancing lessons
Staff, employees, coaches
Build a dock so they can fish
Dogs or caged animals in park
Nursery for kids
Time out center

Security Concerns
Safety police
Do something about alligators
No swimming sign in front of the pond
Gate, fence around park
Nurse
Security escort
Gate
Alarm system
Appendix L: “Design Charette Agenda”

TAMPA HEIGHTS GREENPRINTING INITIATIVE
Design Charette Agenda
January 17, 2004
8:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Robles Park Community Center

8:00 Sign in and refreshments
8:15 Welcome and introductions
   Greenprinting overview
      Jennifer Sterling, Director of Programs
      Mayor’s Beautification Program

   Explanation of the charette process
      Trent Green, Associate Professor
      School of Architecture, University of South Florida

   Summary of resident input
      Maya Harper, Graduate Research
      Department of Anthropology, University of South Florida

8:45 Break into charette teams
12:15 Lunch
12:45 Finalize concept plans
1:30 Concept plans called in
   Judges’ orientation
2:00 Judging begins
3:00 Winning plan announced
Appendix M: Results from Informal Interviews with Neighbors around Park

Additions
Garbage cans
Add tables
Add refrigerated water fountains
Put in more drinking fountains by basketball court
Put in sprinkler like that in Lowry Park
“A pool would destroy the landscape.”
Computers
Some lights
Bleachers
Add benches

Barbecue
BBQ grills and stands for get-togethers
Picnic tables

Bathrooms
Opening more bathrooms is a necessity
Bathrooms “need to be open during day”
“More stalls”

Community events
Need a stage for community events
Computer classes for elderly
Ceramic classes
Bingo
Shuffleboard
Use recreation center for weddings, special occasions
“Need urban planners”
Christmas wonderland
February Black history pageant with merchants selling different items
School preparation -- Book bags, pencils, haircuts
Concession stand
Health screening -> glaucoma, diabetes, AIDS & drug awareness, high blood pressure, condoms, health department

Historic
Historic: Ranger in park
Historic: Kids fished 3x/year, projects
Historic: When interstate was built, pond was converted to a retention pond
Historic: Students used to study the many species of animals in the middle of the pond
Historic: There used to be fishing tournaments in the pond
Go back to having pond be a healthy environment for wildlife
Historic: Recreation center used to be used for weddings

*Miscellaneous*
Improve drainage in park
Locate gas smell in park (maybe from manholes, some say)
Some way to keep trash out of the yard (common request)
Speeding signs
  • “Cars go really fast” past their houses
Supervision of park at night
  • To curb the “dealing” that happens in the park after dark
Building renovation

*Park grounds & Playground*
Tennis courts
Expand playground, add swings, etc.
Light basketball court at night
Tetherball
More seating by baseball diamond
Make baseball diamond consistent and regulation size
Fix and expand basketball (nets, etc.)
See-saw
Baby Swings
More playground equipment
Put swings on the side by the pump station
  • Resident complained that right now all they see is the pump station

*Pond*
Clean pond
  • “Get the garbage from out of the pond”
  • “It smells extra when they’re draining the pond”
  • “The smell from the pond – been calling about it”
Fix clogged pipe in fountain in middle of pond
  “Make sure they keep the pond”
Bridge over pond
Retention pond is a necessity
Fence or “hedges with prickly stuff” around the pond
Pumping station
Move sewage station to the other side of the pond
Water treatment and disinfectant station
  “I Love the pond… hate when they drain it”
Flowers around lake
Crape Merk  Community plant
Azaleias
Fish
“Stock the lake so you can fish”

Fix problem of alligators coming through pipes

Supervision & Security
Supervision in park
  • (because youth “hunt frogs”)
  • “Regulations on coming and goings in the building” (Recreation center)
“Put up posts so they can’t ride bikes onto the lawn and tear up the grass”
Security lighting
Night-time supervision of the park

Water features
Swimming pool (although one said this could be a problem)
Slide or water slide
Water play fountain
  • “Something like the water at Lowry – water shoots up... lights, plays music”

Youth activities
“They need more activities for the kids so they don’t cause trouble” (football, etc.)
Beadwork
Activity planner at center
Staff needs to have activities with kids
Regulations on coming and going in building for dances
Activity for kids for Sundays
Bring more kids to the park – older kids take over park
“Structured program in the summer” – youth have lots of idle time in summer
Older kids: entertainment on weekends
Tutoring program for FCAT crucial
Job fair, armed forces exhibit
“Kids don’t have anything to do, don’t know opportunities that are out there”
Boy scouts/girl scouts
Camping and fishing trips in the park
### Appendix N: Tampa Heights Civic Association Questionnaire Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tampa Heights Civic Association questionnaire results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are you a Tampa Heights resident?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How often do you use Robles Park?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I haven’t yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe once/month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have not used it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About every other day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What kinds of activities do you do at the park?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking walks; sitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None yet but I would like to start using the exercise trail in the near future. In the far future I would like to have organized sports and activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk/Playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>******</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk, take the grandkid to play in the park, use the playground. Kids play basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What do you generally think about Robles park? (Likes, dislikes…)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not an inviting place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love seeing the water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s pretty; like the exercise trail, basketball court; park is great but walk to get to the park is not very safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seems unkempt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lake acts more like a drainage ditch. Improve drainage, park floods too easily, good trail around the lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*******</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like the location in the heart of the community. Like the open space, lake, don’t like dirtiness of park or dirtiness of lake, or trash around park, Don’t like the lake being a retention pond instead of a healthy vital lake for fishing like it used to be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What improvement does the park need?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve water feature with lighting; lighting; reason to go there like a skate park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make it extremely visible from I-275 with signage directing people off ramp at Floribraska and routing to park</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

149
| Lights at night to keep the bad elements out, park clean, and let police see what happens at night |
| Pond, lighting, appearance |
| Update activity center and have city programs, community activities, put lights around the lake, add a modern playground, do something with the lake, partial seawall |
| Family picnic facilities (more shelters, picnic tables, trash cans, etc.) |
| Organized programs for the kids. Plant flowers around the lake, get the fountain working again in the middle of the lake, place a bridge over the lake, improve the baseball field, Repair the walkway. Improve the playground, Add a tennis court, clean the lake |

6. Do you know about the Greenprinting initiative meetings?
   All yes

* = left blank
Appendix O: Survey Results

The survey results came in after my official position as an intern with the MBP was over.

The current coordinator of the Greenprinting Initiative tabulated the survey responses from the 104 surveys they received back. Results are listed below:

| Preliminary Tampa Heights Greenprinting Initiative Survey Summary: Robles Park |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 104 returned                |                             |                             |                             |                             |                             |

1) How many people live in your household? Please write the number next to each age group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>33 0-5 years</th>
<th>18 6-10 years</th>
<th>13 11-14 years</th>
<th>27 15-20 years</th>
<th>113 21-54 years</th>
<th>44 55+ years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2) What factors limit your/family's use of Robles Park? Check all that apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>42 Inadequate bathrooms</th>
<th>10 Don't have time</th>
<th>29 Inadequate Equipment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>91 Safety concerns</td>
<td>60 Park not clean enough</td>
<td>26 No programmed activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Nothing interesting going on</td>
<td>9 No league sports</td>
<td>4 Too far from home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) What activities do you or would you/family like to do in Robles Park? Check all that apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>29 Organized Sports</th>
<th>53 Family gatherings</th>
<th>31 Water play</th>
<th>57 Community parties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37 Informal play</td>
<td>28 Fish</td>
<td>71 Picnic/BBQ</td>
<td>71 Relax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 League sports</td>
<td>65 Exercise</td>
<td>61 Attend concerts</td>
<td>31 Garden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) What do you think needs to be added or improved in Robles Park? Check all that apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>82 Security lighting</th>
<th>55 Playground equipment</th>
<th>56 Barbeque Grills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41 Sports field lighting</td>
<td>62 Benches</td>
<td>36 Picnic Tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 Sports fields</td>
<td>37 Fence/Gates</td>
<td>68 Trash cans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 Concession stand</td>
<td>69 Flowers/Landscaping</td>
<td>54 Drinking fountain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72 Increased Supervision</td>
<td>47 Building improvements</td>
<td>72 Pond improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47 Parking</td>
<td>60 Interactive play fountain</td>
<td>55 Public art</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5) How often would you/your family use Robles Park if it was improved? Please check one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>16 Daily</th>
<th>39 2-6 Times/week</th>
<th>19 Once/week</th>
<th>30 Occasionally</th>
<th>1 Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>