

**A Critical Geopolitical Analysis of
Urban/Suburban Green Spaces:
Meadowbrook Park as a Material Discourse**



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Critical Geopolitical Approach to Analysis

Seeks to identify collective priorities about something through three main questions:

1. How are the role and meaning of the environment described/defined?
 - a. Commons, planetary systems, resource use etc.
2. What is the role of human agency within this claim or view of the world?
 - a. Often invisible power dynamics
 - b. Cause and effect relationships
3. What is the spatial focus of this particular claim?
 - a. “True impact”
 - b. Scale

TLDR: “Nothing really happens on accident”

Material Discourses

Material:

- Physical manifestation
- How do power and knowledge translate into infrastructure in a physical place?

Discourse:

- Narrative force
- What is being said or communicated?



Urban/Suburban Green Spaces: Background



World Health Organization says:

- Urban/Suburban green spaces can serve to:
 - Promote mental and physical health
 - Promote psychological relaxation and stress alleviation
 - Stimulate social cohesion
 - Support physical activity
 - Reduce exposure to air and noise pollutants

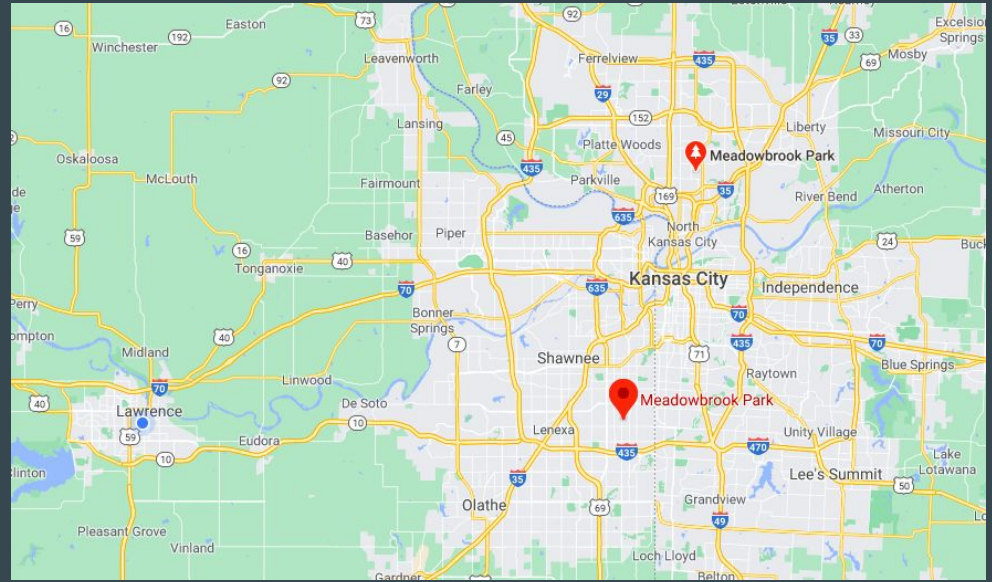


World Health Organization

Meadowbrook Park

Background:

- 1953: Meadowbrook Golf and Country Club established
- 1976: voters reject to rezone
- 2005: Opus, LLC offers mixed-space plans
- 2008: economic recession, Van Tuyl acquisition
- 2015: ground break on Meadowbrook Park



Map:

- Located in Prairie Village, Kansas
- Population: ~22,000
- Median home value: ~\$261,500
- Median household income: ~\$88,000

Meadowbrook Master Plans



136 acres total:

- 94 public
 - Paved trails
 - Event spaces
 - Three playgrounds
 - Eight pickleball courts
 - Shelters
- 42 private
 - Single family homes
 - Villas
 - Hotel

Role and Meaning of the Environment

Goals:

- Maximize community benefits
 - o Health
 - o Social
- Maximize business interests
 - o Investors
 - o Land developers



Pros:

- Stormwater management
- Air, water quality improvement

Cons:

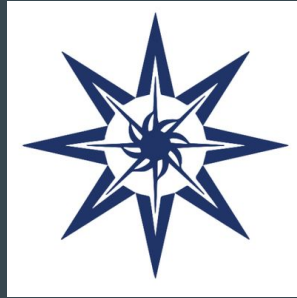
- Construction impacts
- Resource use



Role of Human Agency

Key Stakeholders for Meadowbrook Project:

- Cecil Van Tuyl/VanTrust Real Estate
- JCBOCC
- City of Prairie Village
- Johnson County Parks and Recreation Department



Spatial Focus

Scaleable:

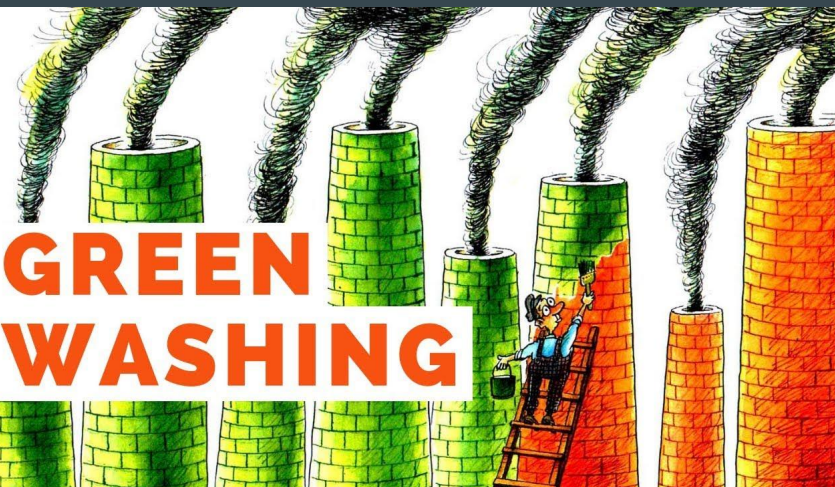
1. Individual level
 - a. Improvements to physical and mental health
2. Community level
 - a. Improvements to social cohesion and capacity for gathering
3. Global level?
 - a. Physical environmental benefits?



Big Picture: *What is Being Secured and For Whom?*



- Who benefits the most from the construction of Meadowbrook Park?
 - Private business interests (Greenwashing)
- Who or what is being overlooked?
 - Accessibility
 - Gentrification
- What information is missing?
 - Empirical health benefits
 - Environmental Impact Statement



What I Learned: How to Build a Better Park (And a Better World)

Urban/Suburban Green Spaces: Results May Vary

- Re-assert the value of the physical environment in development
 - Emphasize sourcing local materials
- Acknowledge possible gentrification and accessibility
- Integrate community involvement in development
- Resist private profit off of green spaces
- Develop capacity for empirical analysis of benefits



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