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Public Programs on the High Line

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Public Programs on the High Line

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my deeply loved twin daughters, Fischer & Sequoia, who traversed the length of the High Line with me hundreds of times, living out mama's dream "vivir un verano en Nueva York." Or as they each like to say "I was in mama's belly in the Big Apple." It's also dedicated to my loving husband, Dason, and stepson, Kai, who supported me in this goal by diligently working hard to build our nest in the meantime.

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Abstract

Public Programs on the High Line

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This study examined the underlying principles and decision-making processes that guided the creation of public programs at the High Line, a linear park and public space in New York City. To explore these underlying principles, three individuals who had the most influence on programming the first formative years of the High Line, were interviewed, Danya Sherman—Former Director of Programs, Education & Community Engagement; Emily Pinkowitz—Deputy Director of Programs & Education; and Abby Ehrlich—Director of Parks Programming at Battery Park City Parks Conservancy and Founding Play Environment & Program Consultant for Friends of the High Line. Emerging from the interviews were five underlying principles that had great influence on the High Line’s public programs: (a) a Commitment to Create a Welcoming Environment; (b) the Acknowledgement of the Significance of Audience Development; (c) a Dedication to High Standards in Programming; (d) the Recognition of a Unique Space; and (e) Acknowledging Future Growth Opportunities and Improvements. Final conclusions result in the recognition of how these five principles contribute to our understandings regarding the development of art education within community settings.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Overview

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This thesis examined the underlying principles and decision-making processes that guided the creation of public programs at the High Line, a linear park and public space in New York City. Programs at the High Line have been extraordinarily successful. Since its highly recognized opening in 2009, the High Line has been praised for its innovation and contribution to the community and diverse arts: “With more than two million visitors in its first year, the High Line has become a global destination as well as a favorite new neighborhood park for New Yorkers” (Mayor Bloomberg Presents, 2010). In 2010, New York’s Mayor, Michael Bloomberg, proclaimed the High Line as an essential piece of New York’s industrial history and an innovative public space. His office awarded the Friends of the High Line with the 2010 Doris C. Freedman Award. Bloomberg stated:

By transforming an old rail line into an innovative new park with inventive art installations and public programs, Friends of the High Line helped create an iconic attraction that has captured the history of the neighborhood – and given all New Yorkers and our visitors an elevated oasis to enjoy for generations to come (“Mayor Bloomberg Presents,” 2010).

In order to better understand the High Line’s programming in this unique space, I performed an extensive literature review on works that addressed audience development, the creation of a welcoming environment, educating in unique spaces, community-based arts education, nature education, and ultimately, assessment. I employed case study research methods and performed a set of interviews with Danya Sherman, former Director of Programs, Education & Community Engagement at Friends of the High Line¹; and Emily Pinkowitz, Deputy Director of Programs & Education at Friends of the

¹ In 2013 Danya Sherman left the Friends of the High Line to pursue a degree in Urban Studies & Planning at MIT.

High Line; and Abby Ehrlich, Director of Parks Programming at Battery Park City Parks Conservancy and founding Program Consultant for Friends of the High Line, all of whom helped me uncover the foundational principles that have guided programming on the High Line. All questions were specifically considered in order to learn more about my interviewee's personal experiences, opinions, beliefs, and observations concerning the decision-making behind the Friends of the High Line's public programs agenda and goals.

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION

The following question motivated and directed this research: What are the underlying principles that guided and motivated those who direct and design the public programs at the Friends of the High Line, and how does the recognition of these principles contribute to our understandings regarding the development of art education within community settings?

PROBLEM STATEMENT

I aspired to answer this central research question in order to contribute to a deeper understanding of community-based arts education (CBAE), and to expand the critical dialogue on issues central to CBAE. As a participant at both State and National Arts Education Conferences in 2010, I observed that conversations, research interests, and literature inquiries that focus on CBAE are few in comparison to those surrounding arts education in schools and museums. More focused and diverse studies directed toward community-based arts education may contribute to broadening the dialogue in arts education. This study, in particular, will potentially bring a new perspective to how

CBAE is viewed and regarded. While the High Line started as a grassroots organization, it has grown to become internationally renowned. Taking an in depth look at the decisions that surround community-based arts programs in large organizations may bring a potentially helpful viewpoint to our understanding of CBAE.

MOTIVATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Personal Motivation

My incentives for studying the underlying principles that guided and motivated the Friends of the High Line Public programming and education staff—Danya Sherman, former Director of Programs, Education & Community Engagement; as well as Emily Pinkowitz, Deputy Director of Programs & Education; and founding consultant—Abby Ehrlich and their decision making at the Friends of the High Line are both personal and professional. It is personal because the programming that these women create embodies the variety of experience I would like to employ in my future career. Additionally, I have a standing relationship with the High Line. As a Community-Based Arts Education graduate student who began researching internship opportunities, I remember my first peek at the High Line’s website that revealed the history of diverse programming in the arts: dance, visual arts, storytelling, puppeteering, music, visual arts, and more. I was drawn to working with Friends of the High Line because of the organization’s commitment to strengthening the connection between a variety of arts and experiences with New York’s multi-cultural community. This dream became a reality as I worked with the Friends of the High Line in the summer of 2011, the year of their Family Program’s inaugural season. Since then, I have helped to write a portion of the curriculum for the High Line’s 2012 Wild Wednesday and Saturday Play summer

programs. I appreciate the High Line as a public space and find its diverse programming particularly fun, playful, cutting-edge, informative, and contemporary. This study takes a deeper look at the motivations and decision-making behind the opportunities the Friends of the High Line creates for its visitors.

Professional Motivation

Understanding the motivations and philosophies that drive those who create the engaging and successful programming in an internationally renowned public space such as the High Line will inform any future work undertaken in arts education. As an art educator who intends to bring high quality public arts programming to any community I am a part of, I believe that a thorough study of these philosophies will contribute to future excellence in public program creation and management. By taking a deeper look at the High Line's public programs, I intend to garner which programmatic philosophies may be considered comprehensive and able to be applied to other spaces and public programs. To accomplish this, it will be important to ascertain which aspects of the High Line's public programming philosophies are wide-reaching, as there can be no other High Line. However, analyzing the aspects that reflect deeper programmatic philosophies, beliefs, and underlying principles helps to reveal the details that may assist in informing public program curriculum design in other locations.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The primary limitation of this study that investigates the grounding of underlying principles that guided and motivated those who directed and designed the public programs at the Friends of the High Line is centered on the choice of research method.

Due to the chosen framework of the case study, I limited my sample set from which I gathered my information. I intentionally focused on a narrow view of the High Line: the education, programs, and community engagement of this organization. My primary investigation of the High Line was through interviews with three key individuals with unique perspectives on the founding years of educational programming at the High Line: Danya Sherman, Emily Pinkowitz, and Abby Ehrlich. Due to this approach, information that was gathered is projected through the narrow lens of these three individuals. In order to accomplish the most within the confines of case study research, I questioned Ms. Sherman, Ms. Pinkowitz, and Ms. Ehrlich regarding topics such as programming for park users, target audiences, general programmatic philosophies, site-specific program philosophies, considerations and outside influences and how these factors affected their decision making. A complete view of interview questions, themes, and responses are found in Appendix A.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

- **Audience Development** is the “cultivation and growth of long-term relationships, firmly rooted in a philosophical foundation that recognizes and embraces the distinctions of race, age, sexual orientation, physical disability, geography and class. It is also the process of engaging, educating and motivating diverse communities to participate in a creative, entertaining experience as an important *partner* in the design and execution of the arts” (Walker-Kuhne, 2005, p.10).
- **Community-Based Art Education** “(CBAE)... places art in a community context. In essence, CBAE is community art used as both a creative practice and a teaching method to fulfill educational objectives ranging from creative self-

expression to competency with discipline-specific standards” (Krensky & Lowe, 2009, p. 12).

- **Community (or Public) Engagement** The NCDD states that regardless of the technique employed, almost all dialogue and deliberation techniques, (a) utilize facilitators and ground rules to create a safe atmosphere for honest, productive discussion; (b) frame the issue, questions and discussion materials in a balanced and accurate manner; (c) have citizens and decision-makers on all sides of the issue talk to each other face-to-face in multiple small groups; (d) use the input and outcomes generated to inform the decision-making process (National Coalition of Dialogue & Deliberation, 2010), and “Learning and exchanging knowledge, identifying priorities and possibilities, making decisions, and making things happen” (Beeck et al., 2011). (Tiwari, Lommerse, & Smith, 2014, p. 8)
- **Participation-building** “Broadening audiences (attracting more audience members like those currently attending), deepening them (enriching the experience of participants), or diversifying them (bringing new groups into the fold)” (Parker, 2012, p. 4).

BENEFITS TO THE FIELD OF ART EDUCATION

The High Line’s public programs participants are offered opportunities to experience varied arts activities with objectives including self-expression, nature appreciation, art history, and investigative play. By inviting diverse visitors to participate in free public and locally relevant programming along-side regional residents, the High Line has become a community and global treasure and an excellent example of a community-based art education venue. Researching the programmatic decisions made

for internationally renowned spaces such as the High Line may help to expand the field of arts education through the identification of wide-reaching principles made to inform future high quality arts programming. Moreover, the principles garnered from this research may translate and directly apply to the decision-making process and creation of engaging community-based arts focused programs in any number of public spaces.

SUMMARY

In this chapter I sought to explain the essential goals and motivation for conducting this research project. My question regarding the grounding of underlying principles that guided and motivated those who directed the public programs at the Friends of the High Line, my personal motivations, my professional motivations, and my interest in advancing the future excellence of public program creation in community-based arts education all drove this research.

In the chapters that follow, I examine multiple sources that helped me identify and understand the underlying principles of the High Line. First, steps were taken to examine case study research, the research methodology I used to execute this project. The second step was to examine literature pertinent to this study, namely writings that addressed: audience development, the creation of a welcoming environment, educating in unique spaces, community-based arts education, nature education, and assessment. Next, it was essential to explore the history of the unique structure that is the High Line. Ultimately, came the analysis of the conducted interviews with Friends of the High Line public programming and education staff: Danya Sherman, the former Director of Programs, Education & Community Engagement; Emily Pinkowitz, the Deputy Director of Programs & Education; and the founding education and programming consultant, Abby

Ehrlich. Within this section, I revealed and examined the five underlying principal themes that emerged from the interviews: (a) a Commitment to Create a Welcoming Environment; (b) the Acknowledgement of the Significance of Audience Development; (c) a Dedication to High Standards in Programming; (d) the Recognition of a Unique Space; and (e) Acknowledging Future Growth Opportunities and Improvements. In the concluding chapter, I present the underlying principles and address how the recognition of these principles contributed to our understandings regarding the development of art education within community settings.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES—CASE STUDY

In order to uncover the underlying principles that guide and motivate those who direct the public programs at the Friends of the High Line, I chose to perform a case study. I reviewed three high quality sources of case study literature to better understand this form of research. The resources used to construct my research were Robert K. Yin's 2009 publication *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Bill Gillham's 2000 volume entitled *Case Study Research Methods*, and Arch G. Woodside's 2010 book, *Case Study Research: Theory, Methods and Practice*.

Robert K. Yin's book *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, proved to be very insightful for my research. In his volume, Yin (2009) shared that, "As a research method, the case study is used in many situations, to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena" (p. 2). Yin (2009) affirmed that one might choose to utilize the case study method when doing in-depth research on a real-life phenomenon: "In brief, the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events—such as... organizational processes..." (p. 2). To truly understand more about the High Line's public programs, it was essential to find a research method that fused well with the questions I had developed. For the above reasons, case study research was the most suitable research method I could employ to assist me in examining and understanding philosophies behind the public programs used at the High Line in New York.

When beginning a case study research project, it is essential to develop a research design that provides a “logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions” (p. 26). Yin (2009) laid out five important components of research design: (a) a study’s questions; (b) its propositions, if any; (c) its units of analysis; (d) the logic linking the data to the propositions; and (e) the criteria for interpreting the findings (p. 27). Employing both Yin’s components and Gillham’s (2000) urging to “keep an open mind” (p.18) while formulating general goals and questions, I was prepared to begin my research.

Gillham (2000) provided an excellent framework for understanding case study by detailing each of the steps in his 2000 publication *Case Study Research Methods*. In his chapter “Research Preliminaries” Gillham discussed the necessity of doing a review of literature prior to beginning research, while acknowledging the importance of forming a dialogue with the research. He says, “The case study researcher faces a rather difficult situation. His or her ‘case’ will have unknown and highly specific characteristics. To read the literature *in vacuo* may mean that irrelevant or unsuitable material is studied” (p.16). Gillham (2000) labels the first steps as the following: (a) reading the (probably) relevant literature; (b) getting to know your case in their setting; (c) deciding, in a not too focused fashion, what your broad aims are; and (d) making a start on getting your research questions into shape (p.16).

Woodside (2010) offered a broad definition of case studies in his book *Case Study Research: Theory, Methods and Practice*. Here, Woodside (2010) states case study research: “Is an inquiry that focuses on describing, understanding, predicting and/or controlling the individual (i.e. person... organization...)” (p. 1). His book focused on fourteen case study methods, with the objective of “offer[ing] nitty-gritty details of processes [steps] in building theory and designing, implementing and evaluating a broad

range of case study research methods” (Preface). Though mostly aimed at marketing research, Woodside’s detailed book remained relevant to my research preparation. I investigated pertinent information of applicable case study theory, which helped to inform my understanding of case study best practices and necessary approaches to conversations with my interviewees.

Particularly beneficial in the preparation of my research interviews was Woodside’s section on “Deep Understanding: The Principal Objective of Case Study Research.” Woodside indicated that deep understanding in case study research includes “knowledge of ‘sensemaking’ processes created by individuals” (p. 6). He later goes on to define sense making as “how the individual (i.e., person, group, and/or organization) make sense of stimuli. Sensemaking foci include: (1) focusing on what they perceive; (2) framing what they perceive; (3) interpreting what they have done, including how they solve problems and the results of their enactments” (p. 6). These definitions helped me to generate thorough interview questions. These questions revealed my subject’s thinking processes, perceptions of their work with the High Line and aided me in developing my instructional interpretations of programming and philosophies.

When approaching my own case study, I took Gillham’s organic dialogue and Woodside’s discussion of sensemaking to heart. Pre-interviews, I read literature that I believed to be appropriate to my study. A good portion of the materials were relevant, though not all of it was directly applicable to my interviews and my study—I chalked this up to the experience of developing my skills as a researcher, and moved forward. I created preliminary questions for my interviewees with their perceptions in mind. With my first round of questions finalized, I made arrangements to speak with my interviewees. Realizing that further questions would be generated after initial

conversations, I inquired if the interviewees would consent to participate in one or a series of interviews. All the participants agreed to be interviewed.

Yin (2009) stated that finding a unit of analysis is essential to the success of a case study: “Selection of the appropriate unit of analysis will start to occur when you accurately specify your primary research questions” (p. 30). He stated that the unit of analysis is “the same definition of the case” (p. 30). My research questions are: What are the underlying principles that guided and motivated those who directed and designed the public programs at the Friends of the High Line? How does the recognition of these principles contribute to our understandings regarding the development of art education within community settings? Yin (2009) warned, “Most investigators will encounter... confusion in defining the unit of analysis or ‘case’” (p. 32). After careful consideration, I decided that the unit of analysis in this case study is the High Line’s public programs.

Assembling case study evidence, or data collection, is essential for building one’s case and obtaining the most complete picture of the research outcomes. Case study evidence “may come from six sources: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts” (p. 98). Yin (2009) maintained that there are three principles of data collection. These are that the researcher, (a) use multiple sources of evidence, (b) create a case study database, and (c) maintain a chain of evidence (p.114).

Triangulation is the first principle of data collection. Triangulation is the rationale for using multiple sources of evidence. It encourages researchers to, “collect information from multiple sources, but aimed at corroborating the same fact or phenomenon” (p.116). There is a difference between triangulated data and simply using multiple sources of evidence:

When you have really triangulated the data, the events or facts of the case study have been supported by more than a single source of evidence; when you have used multiple sources but not actually triangulated the data, you typically have analyzed each source of evidence separately and have compared the conclusions from the different analyses—but not triangulated the data. (p. 116)

My case study utilized three of the six sources of evidence: documentation, archival records, and interviews. I integrated documentation, e-mail correspondence, and administrative documents into my research. I also used archival records, blogs and website postings, which were all important sources of programmatic information. Finally, I conducted multiple interviews with three different individuals, Danya Sherman, Emily Pinkowitz, and Abby Ehrlich, who were essential to the administration of the High Line's public programs.

Yin's (2009) second principle of data collection regards the organization of the data collected in the research process. He recommended to assist in organization, one should create a case study database. I meticulously remained organized during my research process, and adhered to Yin's recommendation that this is an important, if not essential, piece in conducting thesis research.

Yin's (2009) third principle of data collection, "used to increase the reliability of the information" (p.122), is to maintain a chain of evidence. This chain includes the citation of documents used in the research, revealing all information regarding circumstances under which evidence was collected. It must be remembered that these "circumstances should be consistent with the specific procedures and questions contained in the case study protocol" (p.123). Per Yin's recommendation, I thoroughly documented and maintained a chain of evidence through citations and incorporation of essential interview information throughout my case study.

In-depth data analysis is an essential step in case study research. Yin (2009) stated that "Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise

recombining evidence, to draw empirically based conclusions” (p.126). This is the stage where all past work comes together and as researchers we make sense of what we have assembled. Gillham (2000) emphasized, “Analyzing the total array of data and presenting it adequately, is a formidable task. The more orderly you have been in your habits, the easier it will be” (p. 93). Considering this insight, I did my best to keep my research as organized as possible thus to make the reporting of my work more straightforward.

The reporting phase brings closure to the hard work done in case study research. This is the phase where researchers share their findings with their target audiences. Yin (2009) suggested that, because the reporting phase can be long, it begins as early as possible in the stages of the project to keep the process fluid: “The smart investigator will begin to compose the case study report even before the data collection and analysis have been completed” (p.165). Yin (2009) outlined the five characteristics of highly successful case studies: (a) the case study must be significant, (b) it must be complete, (c) must consider alternative perspectives, (d) must display significant evidence, and finally (e) must be composed in an engaging manner (p.185). The goal of reporting the research is to make a lasting contribution to research in the field. While keeping Yin (2009), Gillham (2000), and Woodside’s (2010) case study wisdom and recommendations in mind, I reported my findings in as clear and straightforward manner as possible. In doing so, my goal is to contribute a significant investigation to the growing body of research within the field of community based arts education.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT & WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

To gain full and rich insights into the underlying principles that guided and motivated those who directed and designed the public programs at the Friends of the High Line, I reviewed literature pertaining to audience development. One of the major themes that emerged from my conducted interviews was the importance of developing an enthusiastic local audience who felt welcomed and invested in the High Line. This section discusses literature that sheds light on the topic of audience development, and specifically how organizations can create a welcoming environment for their participants.

Donna Walker-Kuhne's (2005), *Invitation to the Party: Building Bridges to the Arts, Culture and Community*, was recommended by the High Line's former Director of Programs, Education & Community Engagement, Danya Sherman. In Walker-Kuhne's (2005) own words, "This book is intended to guide producers, presenters, arts administrators, and educators toward specific strategies that engage, educate and activate (primarily, but not exclusively) audiences of color" (p. xii). With over 25 years of experience developing audiences in the performing arts field, Ms. Walker-Kuhne has an incredible amount of pertinent advice to share regarding attracting diverse individuals to arts focused programming. Her book discloses two case studies as well as chapters regarding building bridges to the arts, envisioning, planning, and building audiences.

Invitation to the Party discussed the importance of knowing an organization's ultimate goal, and having a distinct vision or plan. This form of organizational goal setting takes effort, cooperation, and focus: "The most important component of audience development is a spirit of collaboration among every department of the arts institution—a willingness to invest the time, labor and resources needed to be successful" (p. 5). If

audience development is the ultimate goal, it needs to be a priority for every employee at an organization:

Audience development requires a strategic plan that is holistically integrated into the fabric of your arts organization. The strategic plan must be grounded in the history of the institution, as well as the history of the audiences you are seeking to attract. It must be based on an understanding of and a willing openness to multiple cultures. More important than ‘filling seats’ or meeting ‘the bottom line,’ the purpose of executing a strategic audience development plan is to build a long-lasting foundation for your institution grounded in the very communities you are opening your doors to serve. (Walker-Kuhne, 2005, p. 7)

Walker-Kuhne (2005) discussed the importance of audience development and how it differs from outreach. Ultimately, an organization is looking to expand opportunities or create “points of entry” (p.12) for new and diverse audiences to experience what the organization has to offer:

Outreach entails an organization’s making contacts and opening its doors. Audience development, on the other hand, is about making contacts, going into the communities you are trying to reach, engaging the in dialogue or activities related to the arts and your institution’s activities, forming partnerships, and creating doors where none existed before. (Walker-Kuhne, 2005, p.12)

In chapter three, Walker-Kuhne offered various tools for building audiences. One of the first qualities that she suggested is to learn how to listen. She refers to Stephen R. Covey, the author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, who says that the three listening techniques are: look directly at the person who is speaking, learn to listen with everything you’ve got, and forget yourself completely. Learning these is important for audience development because, according to Walker-Kuhne (2005), it “requires that we talk to our potential audience, hear what they have to say, and incorporate their ideas into the work of our institutions” (p. 22). Besides listening, she discussed the ten tools for building audiences; investment, commitment, research, educating your artists and

audiences: review and analysis, follow-up, partnership, building the bridges/ extending the invitation, creating value, and finally, appreciation (p. 23).

The Wallace Foundation's conference report written by Susan Parker (2012) entitled *Building Arts Organizations that Build Audiences*, documented the findings from the 2011 conference entitled *Building Audiences: Sustaining What Works* that brought together 54 Wallace Excellence Awards grantees to discuss "their audience development projects and try to make sense of what they have learned to inform their audience-building work in the future" (p. 3). The report covered 5 main themes of the conference: (a) What do audiences expect from arts organizations?, (b) Three essentials of participation-building, (c) Understanding audiences, (d) Involving the whole organization, and (e) A culture of learning and experimentation. Below, I discuss each of these themes and how they were represented in the report.

The first topic covered in Parker's (2012) piece was a discussion of what audiences expect from arts organizations. Parker (2012) reported varying perspectives between the participating organizations. Opinions spanned the range of responses. On one end of the spectrum Ben Cameron, the program director for the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, stated, "Modern audiences want to be more than passive recipients of art that someone else has decided for them" (p. 3). On the other side of the argument, some believe that arts organizations should be leaders and ultimately in charge of what arts audiences experience. James Cuno, the CEO of the J. Paul Getty Trust offered, "What museums do best is to present works of art to people," and continued, "Our job is to make sure everyone feels that this collection is for them" (p. 4).

The next theme covered in Parker's (2012) piece discussed the three essentials in participation-building, and defined them as, "Broadening audiences (attracting more audience members like those currently attending), deepening them (enriching the

experience of participants), or diversifying them (bringing new groups into the fold)” (p. 4). The writing also suggested that if an organization was to make strides in participation-building it is required to pay specific attention to the three components: “Understanding audiences and figuring out strategies to ‘meet them where they are’, Involving the whole organization, and Creating a culture that embraces experimentation and learning” (p. 4).

Parker (2012) discussed the importance of understanding audiences. She writes, “Arts organizations that want to build their audiences, need to understand their audiences” (p. 5). Parker wrote about the various avenues that the Wallace Foundation grantees discussed how to best comprehend their audiences. The main way to best know audiences is to do market research. The participants shared their best methods and success stories when using data collection. Some of the ideas disclosed were conducting post-performance discussions with theatergoers, making sure to listen to feedback and responding appropriately, and creating bridges to the community by utilizing relationships with influential community members.

Involving the whole organization in developing audience participation was another theme discussed by the group. Parker (2012) wrote, “If arts organizations want to change their audience interactions, they often need to change themselves, too” (p. 7). Allison Crean, a partner in New Legacy Partnerships gave three key factors for ensuring organization participation in audience development. The three factors she indicated were: “opportunity (the chance to do things differently), capacity (the skills to carry it out) and incentives (ways to provide motivation)” (p. 8). This sort of organizational buy-in must be at all levels, said MacPhail Center for Music President and COO Paul Babcock. He also stated that starting at the top was “particularly vital are the president and senior staff members” (p. 9). However, Parker also emphasized

that many of the conference goers expressed, “The people with senior titles are not enough. Effective audience-building requires all hands on deck” (p. 9).

The last theme Parker discussed was creating a culture of learning and experimentation. Parker (2012) stated that this included an “atmosphere that encourages employees to assess their work, use disagreement effectively, innovate at the boundaries of departments and take risks” (p. 11). Leslie Crutchfield, a keynote speaker stated that organizations with this sort of philosophy “are constantly listening to the environment, are willing to experiment and innovate and step back and evaluate and modify plans” (p. 11). Parker also stressed that along with experimentation, comes failure. Embracing failure as a learning opportunity is key to moving forward with a successful next step. “You want to fail early and fail often,” said David Bradford, management author and senior lecturer at Stanford University. Mr. Bradford continued to explain how organizations can adopt this mindset: “Doing small experiments; having strong, consistent vision from leaders; and finding ways to clearly support failure so people take risks” (p. 12). Some participants stated that they raise specific funds for experimental projects under “artistic enhancement and “risk capital” (p. 12). These sorts of small projects embrace innovation, understanding failure as a learning opportunity, in other words “experimentation is good; that means failure is, too” (p. 12).

Tiwari, Lommerse, and Smith (2014) edited the compilation, *M² Models and Methodologies for Community Engagement*, which discussed the topics of community engagement, capacity building, and community empowerment. This book’s informative first chapter details various aspects and literature that explain the foundation of community engagement, community empowerment and capacity building and defined

community engagement as “learning and exchanging knowledge, identifying priorities and possibilities, making decisions, and making things happen” (Beeck et al., 2011). (Tiwari, Lommerse, & Smith, 2014, p. 8)

Throughout their work, Tiwari, Lommerse, and Smith (2014) “conceptualized the community—particularly during projects involving community engagement and participation—as a social practice, and therefore, equivalent to a discipline in the way it operates” (p. 10). The authors compared professional disciplines and sub-disciplines to communities in “that neither grouping is a static entity or skill set, but rather a set of experiences and evolving ideas, as much as they are a set of practices and knowledge” (p. 10). The work continued to discuss the importance of bringing together many ideas to seek solutions: “Individual community members, alone or as a group, bring their own core knowledge and skills to any project” (p. 11).

Tiwari, Lommerse, and Smith (2014) shared the attributes of transdisciplinary community action for change as being a combination of the following: (a) the community owns and/or belongs to the location of the project; (b) the project activities will occur on the community member’s territory; (c) the project will disrupt the community’s existence in some way; and (d) the consequences (positive and negative) will remain with the community after the life of the project. They also stated that due to this framework, “as a consequence, the community, as a member of the project, has a unique relationship with it” (p. 12).

Chapters 2 through 13 of *M² Models and Methodologies for Community Engagement* detailed case studies of community-based projects spanning the globe, which participated in transdisciplinary and collaborative approaches. Each example has its own “distinct intentions and practices” (p. 16).

Finally, one of the best online sources of information about public engagement is hosted by the organization National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation, or NCDD. The NCDD has links to over 3,000 resources, including dialogue guides, Dialogue and Deliberation (D & D) methods, videos, case studies, evaluation tools, articles, books, programs and more. A particularly succinct resource that aids in painting an overall picture of public engagement is the NCDD'S own publication entitled *Resource Guide on Public Engagement* (2010). Listing most of the techniques for engagement, the aforementioned guide outlines public engagement techniques and states that almost all dialogue and deliberation techniques, (a) utilize facilitators and ground rules to create a safe atmosphere for honest, productive discussion; (b) frame the issue, questions and discussion materials in a balanced and accurate manner; (c) have citizens and decision-makers on all sides of the issue talk to each other face-to-face in multiple small groups; and (d) use the input and outcomes generated to inform the decision-making process.

EDUCATION IN UNIQUE SPACES

To best understand the underlying principles that guided and motivated those who designed and direct and designed the public programs at the Friends of the High Line, it was essential to acknowledge the unique space in which these programs take place. The High Line is a ribbon-like structure that weaves through West Manhattan in Chelsea and has become a thriving public space. The Friends of the High Line has plans to expand an additional half-mile section to the already mile-long structure. It is useful to consider the possible ramifications of this expansion. Considering this, the following section details literature that helped to inform this thesis by contributing to general knowledge of

architecture, the environment, and both arts and environmental education in various types of unique spaces.

Ericksen and Smith wrote the article “Art Education and the Built Environment” in 1978. It is a collaborative piece by an architect and an artist and reveals some of the early urgings to include theories of built environment education into the art education curriculum. Different from traditional art education, “Built environment education stresses the development, first, of an awareness of surroundings, senses, feelings, and needs; then, of an understanding of the functions and the impact of the environment, and finally, of the ability to use the environment and to change it to best satisfy the needs that have been defined” (p. 4). This article seemed particularly relevant because of the High Line’s unique location and how staff utilizes the built environment in much of their current curriculum.

Kevin Lynch’s (1960) book, *The Image of the City*, is referenced in many of the readings mentioned in this literature review. This book appeared to be the cornerstone of thought on urban development and design. In his own words, Lynch (1960) described his book, as “about the look of cities, and whether this look is of any importance, and whether it can be changed” (preface, p. v). Divided into various sections, Lynch’s writing detailed and compared three cities in the United States: Boston, Jersey City, and Los Angeles. His work began by uncovering various elements and form of an urban environment, and evolved to discuss how to apply these elements in developing a cityscape. He concentrated particularly on city legibility as “crucial in the city setting” (p. 3). Lynch’s book has informed my research in that the High Line embraces its physical features as well as the new growth and development occurring in Chelsea, and New York, as part of its program considerations.

McFee's (1980) section on art and environmental design in *Art, Culture, and Environment: A Catalyst for Teaching* discussed how art teachers and their students can "make more thoughtful judgments about the quality of the built environment as this affects people's experience" (p. 210). She quoted Lynch saying that the design of objects and structures, the layout of cities and towns, people's varied lifestyles, the natural landscape, and the weather all affect each other (Lynch, 1960). When we neglect one, all aspects of experience in our systemic environment suffer in some degree. The sections of McFee's book that are relevant to my literature review include a chapter that wove explanations that assist in an understanding of "the relationships among people, art, and the environment" (p. 210). This chapter discussed the different types of spaces (I-Spaces, Shared Spaces, Network Spaces, and Cluster Spaces) and how we use them, how cities and towns evolve, and finally the psychosocial differences in responses to the environment.

Joye's (2011) article, "Biophilic Design Aesthetics in Art and Design Education" in *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, stated that the primary objective of his piece is to "highlight the possibilities of and challenges for biophilic design and discuss its relevance—and the 'natural' aesthetics that goes hand in hand with it—for art and design education" (p. 19). Joye shared his definition of biophilia in quoting biologist, E.O. Wilson:

We are human in good part because of the particular way we affiliate with other organisms. They are the matrix in which the human mind originated and is permanently rooted, and they offer the challenge and freedom innately sought. To the extent that each person can feel like a naturalist, the old excitement of the untrammled world will be regained. I offer this as a formula of re-enchantment to invigorate poetry and myth: mysterious and little known organisms live within walking distance of where you sit. Splendor awaits in minute proportions. (p. 1)

Joye's piece detailed and explained the principles behind biophilic design education and practices. I found this work relevant to this thesis in that the High Line showcases a biophilic design and embraces the park's natural features in its arts and general programming themes.

Haluza-Delay's (2013) article "Re-mystifying the City," published in an online magazine *Green Teacher* offered multiple perspectives on how to inspire "young people to care for the environment in the places they live." Haluza-Delay argued that in order to inspire a deeper sense of ownership and care for the environment, students must see themselves as a part of a system, regardless if they live in a city or in the country: "We must help them to recognize that the natural world exists not only in the wild, unexplored out there but also in the familiar here." The author detailed reasons why it is important to re-mystify the city as well as offers actual activities to assist in the re-mystification process. He suggested six ways to assist in the re-mystification process: (a) Explore nature close to home, (b) Explore the small wonders, (c) Address the nature vs. civilization dichotomy, (d) Explore connections of the city to the land, (e) Explore the feeling of nature, and (f) Make creative change.

DEDICATION TO HIGH STANDARDS IN PROGRAMMING

One underlying principle that guided and motivated the individuals who directed and designed the public programs at the Friends of the High Line, was a firm dedication to maintaining high standards within public programming. The summary of these extracted themes were, (a) a desire to identify and fulfill needs for community-based arts and nature programming, (b) a dedication to provide opportunities that were open ended and inquiry-based, (c) a commitment to create experiences that were unique and fun, and

finally, (d) an obligation to evaluate the effectiveness of techniques, strategies, and overall performance of the public programs. The following is a summary of literature that helped me to best understand these categories.

My conversations with Danya Sherman, Emily Pinkowitz, and Abby Ehrlich, as well as my investigations into the High Line's blogs and web site, helped me to clearly see how the High Line's public program philosophy aligns with my ideas that it serves as a community-arts site. To arrive at this conclusion, I had to investigate more literature on community-based arts and discover how the High Line's programs aligned as a site of community-based arts education. I looked at two primary sources to best understand community-based arts.

Christopher O. Adejumo (2000), shared his definition of community-based art in his February 2000 article featured in *School Arts*. In this article, he stated that community-based art:

Describes works of art produced by people living within the same locality, and defined by common interests such as shared concerns, cultural heritage, traditions, and language patterns. Community-based arts consist of a wide variety of aesthetic objects, such as sculptures, murals, architecture, and various crafts.
(p.12)

Adejumo (2000) argued that individual students best understand works of art that form links to their own personal life experiences. He stated that school art programs may provide a fertile ground for this sort of environment and that community-based art experiences can help us to make those connections. According to the author, he believes that community-based art has cultural and social significance, helps to engender a sense of responsibility, and can be accessed through many avenues. In summary, Adejumo believes that this sort of instruction may allow individuals to “fully comprehend the purpose and functions of art within their environment” (p. 13).

Krensky and Lowe Steffen's (2009) book *Engaging Classrooms and Communities through Art: A Guide to Designing and Implementing Community-Based Art Education* was influential in my study. Their how-to guidebook covered community-based art education settings, educators, participants, and the theory behind the practice, and offered various case studies of community arts. This piece offered a definition of community-based art that is open to the High Line programming as community-based arts education. They stated: "Community-based art education (CBAE)... places art in a community context. In essence, CBAE is community art used as both a creative practice and a teaching method to fulfill educational objectives ranging from creative self-expression to competency with discipline-specific standards" (Krensky & Lowe Steffen, 2009, p. 12).

The High Line staff I interviewed for this research agreed that nature programming was not only relevant on the High Line but that there was a great need for this type of programming in urban locations like New York City. The book that best helped me understand an overarching need for programming focused on nature was Richard Louv's (2005) work entitled *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*. The author discussed everything from a comparison of relationships that children have had with nature over time, to why people, specifically children, need nature, to the dynamics responsible for the youth's shift away from nature, to the new efforts to reunite young people with nature. The author detailed the divide between children and nature in today's technology-driven environment and defined this as nature-deficit disorder. He wrote the following regarding this theme:

The disorder can be detected in individuals, families, and communities. Nature deficit can even change human behavior in cities, which could ultimately affect their design, since long-standing studies show a relationship between the absence,

or inaccessibility, of parks and open space with high crime rates, depression, and other urban maladies. (Louv, 2005, p. 34)

Louv highlighted a particularly potent example that summarized the growing divide between children and nature when he detailed a 2002 British study that revealed the “average eight-year-old was better able to identify characters from the Japanese card trading game Pokemon than native species in the community where they lived: Pikachu, Metapod, and Wigglytuff were names more familiar to them than otter, beetle, and oak tree” (Louv, 2005, p. 33). A disconnected relationship with nature, Louv states, fosters a “diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses” (p. 34). Although a serious condition, Louv stated that the disorder can be reversed or reorganized, and emphasized the importance and health benefits of creating a strong relationship with nature,

Nonetheless, a growing body of evidence indicates that direct exposure to nature is essential for physical and emotional health. For example, new studies suggest that exposure to nature may reduce the symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and that it can improve all children’s cognitive abilities and resistance to negative stresses and depression. (p. 34)

ASSESSMENT

At the time of my interviews, the Friends of the High Line was in the process of embarking on a new phase of program evaluation. To better understand the process of evaluating programs at the High Line, I read two pieces on assessment distributed by prominent foundations. The first writing was a report by The Wallace Foundation and documented the benefits of assessment. The second work was written by the Kellogg Foundation. This piece “provides a framework for thinking about evaluation and outlines

a blueprint for designing and conducting evaluations” (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004, p. 3).

The Wallace Foundation’s report, written by Chris Walker (2004) and entitled *Understanding Park Usership*, documented the benefits of collecting information about park users. The author shares five ways to collect the information and suggests how surveys can be used to improve parks. The report began by sharing the value of gathering park usership information and states, “Usership surveys can help managers operate their parks more effectively and target parks improvements more strategically” (p. 1). Walker (2004) continues, “Data on how people use a park can identify which facilities are being over-, under-, or misused, facilitating decisions about park investment strategies” (p. 1). This sort of information can help managers develop a plan to figure out why park areas are being underused and what to do to address the phenomenon.

The five strategies that Walker (2004) noted in this article to gather usership information were: (a) counting, (b) observation, (c) close-ended questions, (d) open-ended questions, and (e) focus groups. The author disclosed four examples of how these types of surveys assisted in assessing and improving four high profile parks in the United States: Golden Gate Park in San Francisco; Prospect Park in Brooklyn New York; Central Park in Manhattan; and Garfield Park in Chicago.

The Kellogg Foundation’s handbook entitled *W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook: Philosophy and Expectations* outlined the importance of programmatic evaluation to “not only demonstrate that a project worked, but also to improve the way it works” (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004, p. I). Though this piece was “not intended to serve as an exhaustive instructional guide for conducting evaluation” (p. III), it does achieve the goal of helping organizations begin the process of more effectively managing their evaluation processes. The handbook was divided into

two informative parts: *Part One: W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Philosophy and Expectations* presents an overview of the Foundation's framework for evaluation, evaluation history, and the three levels of evaluation: (a) Project-level, (b) Cluster evaluation, and (c) Program policymaking evaluation. *Part Two: Blueprint for Conducting Project-Level Evaluation* expanded upon Part One by diving deeper into the three components of project-level evaluation, and sharing the planning, implementation, and utilization steps of project-level evaluation.

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation detailed six principles to help guide evaluation work. The first principle is that evaluations should strengthen projects. The idea behind this principle is that getting feedback that can be reflected upon may be used to strengthen an organization or program. The second principle is that using multiple approaches of evaluation methods can help to address important projects or programmatic issues. The third principle is that evaluations should be designed to address real issues. In other words, the organization or program's evaluation technique should address the needs, culture, and context of its community. The fourth principle is that an organization should create a participatory process. This principle states, "The best evaluations value multiple perspectives and involve a representation of people who care about the project" (p. 2). The fifth principle states that an organization should allow for flexibility. The Foundation discourages rigidity and prescriptive methods of evaluation. Finally, evaluations should build capacity, meaning that "evaluations should be concerned not only with specific outcomes, but also with skills, knowledge, and perspectives acquired by the individuals who are involved with the project" (p. 3).

SUMMARY

To best uncover the underlying principles that guided and motivated those who directed the public programs at the Friends of the High Line, I read and reviewed literature pertinent to this specific case study. The themes of literature important to review for this study regarded: (a) Understanding case studies as a research method; (b) How to develop audiences and create a welcoming environment for public programs participants; (c) How best to utilize and educate within unique spaces such as the High Line; (d) The importance of being dedicated to a high set of programming standards; and (e) Understanding the importance of assessment in public programs. The following chapter examines and discusses the history of the High Line and how it has transformed multiple times over its years of existence to become a major tourist attraction and community resource.

Chapter Three: Story of the High Line: Then and Now

INTRODUCTION TO THE HIGH LINE

The High Line has a diverse and fascinating background. Its website (*High Line History*, n.d.) details the highly acclaimed public space’s history—from its roots as a thriving elevated rail line in the Meat Packing District in Manhattan’s West Side, to its abandonment, becoming a makeshift garden where trees and wildflowers self-seeded in the old rails, the grassroots campaign to preserve and transform it into a public space, to its current thriving and popular park status—running from Gansevoort to West 34th Street, between 10th & 12th Avenues. The High Line park is owned by the City of New York, while the maintenance, public programs, general operations and fundraising of 90 percent of the park’s annual operating budget are run by the non-profit conservancy, Friends of the High Line. Founded in 1999, Friends of the High Line works with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation to ensure the High Line is an outstanding space for its millions of visitors to enjoy.

HIGH LINE HISTORY—BEFORE IT WAS A PARK

The High Line was a raised rail system originally built in the 1930s to replace the dangerous street level rails that ran products through the Meat Packing District from the mid-1800s through the 1920s. During the street level rail’s reign, scores of accidents occurred, inspiring locals to nickname 10th Ave, “Death Avenue.” In order to keep pedestrians safe, the “West Side Cowboys” warned individuals of the upcoming trains by riding on horseback and waving red flags (*High Line History*, n.d.).

After years of public debate concerning the dangers of the rail system, the City and State of New York and the New York Central Railroad passed the West Side

Improvement Project, which eliminated 105 street-level railroad crossings, and included the 13 mile long, 30 foot high elevated system, removing the dangerous trains from Manhattan's pedestrian ways in order to deliver and allow "milk, meat, produce, and raw and manufactured goods to come and go without causing street-level traffic." This system became known as the High Line (*High Line History*, n.d.).

The High Line served as a successful means of moving freight into and out of New York from the mid-1930s through the 1950s. In the 1950s, as other shipping methods, such as trucking, became more popular, the High Line's rails slowly became obsolete. In 1980, the last train ran on the High Line, pulling cars full of frozen turkeys (*High Line History*, n.d.).

THE HIGH LINE—THE MAKINGS OF A PARK

By the 1980s the abandoned railway was seen as an eyesore by some. The southernmost section had already been demolished. The rail's historic structure was in danger of being lost permanently. In 1999, two forward-thinking local residents envisioned a preserved High Line. Joshua David and Robert Hammond formed a non-profit organization, The Friends of the High Line, to save the railway from demolition (*High Line History*, n.d.). There were many obstacles to attaining their vision. In David and Hammond's 2011 book *High Line: The Inside Story of New York City's Park in the Sky*, Joshua David recalled pushing through the first year of the project:

When you look at our first year, so much of what we did was just learn the landscape. The project had a national level and City government level. There was the railroad to deal with, and the community. Our most daunting opponents were the property owners who'd backed the demolition efforts for years. There were more than twenty of them, and most of them had bought their land at prices that reflected that the land had an old railroad structure over it—cheap land in a

manufacturing district.... They hoped to increase their value exponentially by forcing the railroad to tear down the High Line so they could build in that space. We weren't in a good position with the Giuliani administration. Joe Rose, the chair of the Planning Commission, had taken a strong position to the High Line in that first *Times* article. He said 'The High Line is the Vietnam of old railroad structures.... it must come down.' (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 13)

Within ten years from the forming of the Friends of the High Line, many obstacles that challenged David and Hammond's dreams had been overcome. The city had approved the project, an international design competition had been held, the final design teams had been selected, funds had been secured, and construction had begun.

THE HIGH LINE: DESIGN

In 2003, the competition that dictated which architecture/landscape architecture firm received the honor to design the High Line was in full swing. Robert Hammond (2011) stated, "We received fifty-one entries and narrowed those down to seven, and then we did interviews with those seven designers, to learn how they would approach the High Line" (p.73). By 2004 the landscape architecture firm, James Corner Field Operations, and the architecture firm Diller Scofidio + Renfro were selected as the designers. Joshua David (2011) described the team's first presentation to the selection committee:

The Field Ops/DS+R team won many of us over at their first presentation. They described the High Line as a ruin, a found object. Liz Diller used the word illicit: you had to crawl under a fence, and you entered a forbidden, secret area that had an aura of past sex and drugs. This team loved the High Line's dark and mysterious quality, which I was also drawn to. (p. 75)

The selection team was particularly attracted to how the Field Operations & Diller Scofidio + Renfro proposal emphasized nature. Ric Scofidio, a lead architect on the team, said: "My job as an architect is to save the High Line from architecture" (David &

Hammond, 2011, p. 77). The team's plan favored an idealized and elegantly translated version of what was already happening on the High Line. The design had the ability to "reflect a sense of communal mission without wiping away the site's historical character. These competing interests are balanced with exquisite delicacy" (Ouroussoff, 2004). "The plants would push up between the planks just as they did between the gravel ballast of the tracks, blurring the line between the hard walkways and the soft plantings. It would almost be like nature trying to claw back the manmade structure and reclaim it (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 77). Field Operations understood that the plants were to be seen as a very special aspect of the High Line. Robert Hammond (2011) articulated:

The Dutch plantsman Piet Oudolf was on this team and the photos of his past work made you think of an idealized version of the natural landscape that we'd come to love on the High Line. Piet composed grasses and perennials in naturalistic ways, and he left the dead material on the plants in winter, to create sculptural shapes in the snow. When you looked at these photos, you thought, if there is anyone who can create something as beautiful as the High Line in its naturalistic state, it is Piet. (p.78)

Three distinct sections of the High Line were slated to open in different years. In April 2006, the ground breaking and the first phase of construction on the section of the High Line that ran from Gansevoort Street to West 20th Street, known as Section 1 of the High Line began. In June 2009, ten years after the forming of the Friends of the High Line, Section 1 of the High Line was open to the public. Author Annik La Farge (2012), a New Yorker, gave her review of Section 1 in *Publishers Weekly*:

The first section, from Gansevoort to 20th Street, opened in June 2009 and was an instant success, not only because the park is so beautiful but because it's so different, so original. People who have lived in New York all their lives, myself included, were stunned when they first climbed the steps to the High Line and found themselves 30 feet in the air, looking through and into and across Manhattan from a perch they had never had before. Overnight, new vistas of

familiar sights miraculously opened up. At around 19th Street, for example, you can see the Empire State Building perfectly framed through the bell tower of the General Theological Seminary. Two monuments of New York, one a place of business, the other of spirit, suddenly merge against an open sky. At the other extreme are dozens of small architectural details that one barely notices from the street; today they are at eye level, like pictures hanging on a wall: oval's, circles, squares, and diamonds carved in stone on tenements and former factories that line the old railroad. For nearly a half-century, from 1934 to 1980, this was the train's eye view: what engineers and brakemen of the New York Central Railroad glimpsed as they piloted their giant locomotives down the High Line. Today, it belongs to us all. (p. 38)

Section 2 (20th Street to 30th Street) opened in summer 2011. In high season, it is dotted with delicious food carts, public art, incredible views, and has a distinctly different feel from Section 1. Walking North on Section 2, from Section 1, a visitor first encounters one of the permanent features, the Seating Steps, which are bleachers made out of reclaimed materials from industrial buildings. The next beloved feature to many visitors is The Lawn, “a patch of unadulterated grass for sunbathing and picnics” (Murrow, 2011). Moving northward, visitors next encounter The Falcone Flyover, an elevated walkway that offers views of the Chrysler and Empire State buildings. The Flyover is a new take on the High Line walkway and brings visitors even higher above the High Line to the same level as the native and naturalized magnolia and sumac tree tops. The Flyover drops you off at the Viewing Spur, which is “a prime people-watching spot for 26th Street’s gallery strip below” (Murrow, 2011). The Wildflower Field is the final feature before dropping visitors off at Section 3. Filled with perennial flowers, grasses, and native plants, it is a beautiful example of Piet Udolf’s talent for working with a diverse and beautiful plant pallet.

Section 3, known as the Rail Yards, opened to the public September 21, 2014. The Rail Yards’ elements offer types of visitor experiences not seen in the first two sections. The Grasslands Grove is known for its “Secluded seating and communal picnic

areas” (Mullaney, 2014). Next, the Rail Track Walk provides visitors with a new type of interactive experience on the High Line. Here, visitors are encouraged to experience the High Line’s industrial history as they walk on the refurbished rails. The 11th Avenue Bridge features an “elevated catwalk from which visitors can view the park, cityscape, and Hudson River” (Mullaney, 2014). Just west of the 11th Avenue Bridge are the family-oriented Pershing Square Beams. Here, visitors are encouraged to climb on, under and around the original High Line steel beams and girders. The Pershing Square Beams includes “...a series of interactive elements developed exclusively for the High Line, such as a rotating beam, periscopes, a gopher hole, and talking and viewing tubes” (Mullaney, 2014). Finally, the Interim Walkway is the northern most point of the High Line. It “features a simple path through the existing self-seeded plantings, celebrating the urban landscape that emerged on the High Line after the trains stopped running in 1980” (Mullaney, 2014).

HIGH LINE’S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY

Both political and pedestrian New Yorkers have embraced the High Line not only as one of its favorite new public spaces, but for its diverse arts and programming. The High Line both embraces its part in the community and is a public space that invites community participation. Co-founder Robert Hammond stated: “We have a great calendar of public programs, more than three hundred a year, overseen by Danya Sherman, one of the staff members at Friends of the High Line who started as an office assistant and rose to head a department. But many of my favorite happenings on the High Line are spontaneous—the things we didn’t plan” (David & Hammond, 2011, p. 126).

Danya Sherman, the former Director of Public Programs, Education & Community Engagement, stated the importance of engaging the community in the formation of the High Line in her departing interview:

We were always careful to stay in touch with neighborhood leaders and residents, so that we could develop programming that would be of interest and of use to them.... After the park opened in 2009, we tried many types of programs to see what stuck. I believe our organization has learned so much since then. By developing relationships with neighbors, researching programs at other fantastic institutions, and spending a lot of time on the High Line, we've developed a diverse set of programs for all ages and all types of people. My hope is that we continue to create memorable experiences for a diverse population, and pursue public programs that are as unique as the High Line itself. ("Moving On," 2013)

HIGH LINE PUBLIC PROGRAMS

The High Line's website details its diverse public programming. Community focused arts events, classes, tours, talks, public art and nature education are the main emphasis of its calendar. The programs are dedicated to "creating new and innovative opportunities for all ages in a neighborhood under-served by open space. Through public programs, Friends of the High Line encourages community engagement with and stewardship of the High Line, and creates innovative experiences that highlight the distinctiveness of the park itself" ("Public Programs," n.d.). There are seven distinct categories of public programs at the High Line: **Art Programs** (High Line Art Tours, High Line Art Performances), **Education** (After-School Programs, Field Trips, Local Partnerships, Self-Guided Visits), **Food Programs** (Social Soup Experiment, Play with Your Food), **Kids** (Arty Hours, Lawn Time, Wild Wednesday, Play with Your Food, Haunted High Line Halloween, High Line Children's Workyard Kit), **Live!** (Arriba, Make Music New York), **Teens** (Green Corps, Teen Arts Council, and Summer Youth

Corps), **High Line Tours & Talks** (Tours: Free Public Tours, Private Group Tours, Art Tours, Food Tours, History Tours, Nature Tours, Talks: Beyond the High Line, Design Briefing). The following paragraphs describe each of the public programs within the seven categories: Art Programs, Education Programs, Food Programs, Kids, Live!, Teens, and High Line Tours & Talks.

Art Programs

High Line Art encourages invited artists to “engage with the uniqueness of the architecture, history, and design of the High Line and to foster a productive dialogue with the surrounding neighborhood and urban landscape” (“High Line Art,” n.d.). The High Line Arts Programs include both the *High Line Art Tours* as well as the *High Line Art Performances*. “Founded in 2009, High Line Art presents a wide array of artwork including site-specific commissions, exhibitions, performances, video programs, and a series of billboard interventions” (“High Line Art,” n.d.). The specialist-led *High Line Art Tours* focus specifically on the High Line’s evolving public art projects and their curation. *High Line Art Performances* are creative and distinctive open-air performances that occur on the High Line seasonally. An example of a Performance includes a 2013 performance by Mungo Thompson, entitled *Crickets*. This piece features a chamber orchestra’s interpretation of the sounds made by crickets.

Education Programs

After-School Programs: Friends of the High Line has worked with P.S. 11, a local elementary school, to offer weekly arts-based after-school programs since fall 2010. The programming has included trips to the High Line, ecology, design and New York

history. Now focusing on a STEM-based curriculum (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), the children explore the High Line’s “structure, horticulture, and life-cycle” (“High Line Education,” n.d.).

Field Trips: High Line Field Trips are exciting, and experiential investigations of the High Line designed for second to seventh graders. Participants focus on the “design, native ecology, and the history of Manhattan’s West Side” (“High Line Education,” n.d.). All field trips meet the New York City and New York State Learning Standards, and the Common Core State Standards.

Local Partnerships: Utilizing the High Line as a classroom, High Line Educators work with local school teachers to co-create educational curriculum and multi-visit High Line experiences. Successful programs include a three-part history program at P.S. 33, a month-long arts program at P.S. 11, and a year-long ecology study at P.S. 3.

Self-Guided Visits: The High Line has future plans of creating informative and exciting self-guided tours. These tours are arranged in response to a survey that showed that more than 6,000 students and chaperones visited the High Line independently and without any specific guidance.

Food Programs

Social Soup Experiment: This program’s intent is to combine food and human connectedness. A simple, hearty and delicious meal of soup, apples and water was prepared by guest chefs with the purpose of bringing a community together. Hundreds of guests sit beside long tables, situated along the High Line, to share conversation and the joys of breaking bread together.

Play with Your Food: Fall programming at the High Line includes Play with Your Food. This program is an opportunity for the High Line vendors to interact with the children who love their products. Children ages 4 and up, along with their caregivers, “are invited to learn the recipe secrets behind favorite High Line treats, and make their own special snack to enjoy” (“High Line Food Programs,” n.d.).

Kids Programs

Arty Hours: A Summertime Saturday drop-in program that invites children ages four and up to “explore hands-on art projects and create their own masterpieces” (“High Line Kids,” n.d.). The High Line provides participants with art supplies and inspiration for creative projects.

Lawn Time: Every Thursday morning in July and August, young children, ages 0-3, and their caregivers have the opportunity to hear stories, sing, play, design and enjoy the High Line with High Line Staff as well as featured New York City cultural institutions and community organizations.

Wild Wednesday: This program introduces children to the plants and wildlife on the High Line. Every Wednesday in July and August the High Line offers children ages 4 and up the opportunity to explore the nature in the park. The last Wednesday of each month features an exciting creature for the children to observe and to meet, such as butterflies, ladybugs, grasshoppers, and more.

Haunted High Line Halloween: Every Halloween the High Line brings this free and exciting all-ages community festival to life. The rails become haunted with characters from the High Line’s past. Participants find opportunities to get their face

painted, go on exciting scavenger hunts, decorate a pumpkin and get their picture taken at the free photo booth.

High Line Children’s Workyard Kit: Developed by designer Cas Holman, the Children’s Workyard Kit is equipped with “custom-designed wood planks, wheels, ropes, gears, and pulleys” (“High Line Kids,” n.d.). It was designed with the High Line’s industrial past and narrow spaces in mind. The mobile crate is full of materials that inspire children ages 4 and up to construct, build, and pretend play. The Children’s Workyard Kid is in the process of mass production and will be available for purchase.

Live! Programs

¡Arriba!: The ¡Arriba! summertime series is a fun and dynamic way to bring together New Yorkers to dance to incredible Latin sounds. High Line dancers enjoy sunset and stars while dancing to the live rhythms of Salsa, Merengue, Forró, Rumba, Danzón, Timba, and more.

Make Music New York: Make Music New York hosts a community-driven celebration of free, live music in various locations throughout New York’s five boroughs. Twice a year, on the Summer Solstice and Winter Solstice, the High Line hosts celebrations with music that embraces a wide variety of cultures and varies from rap to opera.

Teen Programs

Green Corps: The Green Corps is a job-training and education program targeted at selected local teens. Participants have the opportunity to engage in hands-on experiences while working on, and learning from time spent engaging in creative work at

the High Line. These teens dedicate six months of their lives to attend workshops, meet professionals from green jobs, and work side by side with High Line gardeners, educators, and staff while gaining valuable life experiences as they interact directly with High Line plants and High Line visitors.

Teen Arts Council: The Teen Arts Council (TAC) consists of local teens who work in groups to “design, plan, and produce two events on the High Line each summer... from start to finish, including curation, marketing, outreach, and event production” (“High Line Teens,” n.d.). Participants dedicate six months to learn the ins and outs of public event planning. These teens have the opportunity to meet with professionals in many areas, including music, film, and the arts.

Summer Youth Corps: The Summer Youth Corps is an opportunity for three select teens that participate in the Hudson Guild, a local community center, to gain valuable life experience working for three months on the High Line. Participants assist in the creation and execution of summer drop-in programs: Wild Wednesday and Arty Hours. They also get a taste of other jobs on the High Line as they assist “High Line Gardeners, Custodians, and Rangers in other aspects of parks operation, from gardening to maintenance to visitor services” (“High Line Teens,” n.d.).

High Line Tours & Talks

Tours: Free Public Tours: The High Line Docents lead free and interesting public walking tours every Tuesday in the spring, summer, and fall. The tours offer new visitors to the High Line a comprehensive peek into the story of the elevated park from its history, art, design, and horticulture.

Private Group Tours: Private tours can be arranged for groups of 40 people or less. Though not free, these tours can be tailored to each group. They are docent led and cover topics such as the horticulture, art, design and history of the elevated park.

Art Tours: This specialist tour is catered toward those interested in learning more about the High Line’s very active public arts program. Participants receive firsthand information from the High Line’s Curator & Director of High Line Art, Cecilia Alemani.

Food Tours: The West side of Manhattan is rich in culture and food history. Participants have the opportunity to take a tour with food experts Robin Shulman, author of *Eat the City*, and Sonya Kharas, of Nutshell Project, a project “dedicated to supporting small farm and food businesses that have the potential to serve as model projects in the fields of sustainable food and agriculture” (“Nutshell,” n.d.). These experts explore the past and present food production in New York City, and guide participants through a delicious and interesting specialty food tour on the High Line.

History Tours: The High Line is steeped in history. There is much for anyone interested in history to learn about the High Line. Led by expert historian, Andrew Dolkhart, of Columbia University, these tours give participants a unique view into the history of New York’s West side.

Nature Tours: These specialist led tours offer participants the opportunity to explore the horticulture and wildlife of the High Line firsthand. Individuals learn about creative ways gardeners tend to the elevated garden and create habitat for native birds and wildlife.

Talks: Beyond the High Line: This lecture series invites innovative thinkers from inspirational adaptive reuse projects to share the stories of their plans, progress, success, and challenges when working with obsolete industrial infrastructure as public use.

Design Briefing: The Friends of the High Line offers public design briefings on the third and final section of the High Line at the Rail Yards in an open forum. Design briefings are an excellent means to engage with the community, keeping participants up to date on the project's progress and answer questions.

SUMMARY

To analyze the underlying principles that guided and motivated those who directed and designed the public programs at the Friends of the High Line, it was essential to research the history of how this unique structure became a thriving public space. Over the years the High Line has had many uses and identities. The High Line experienced a dramatic transformation: from its original use as a rail line transporting goods in the Meat Packing District, to its eventual desertion and transformation into a wild, elevated garden, to its resurrection as a public space through determined community advocacy, to becoming a major tourist attraction and community resource. This evolution influences the decisions that are made by the Friends of the High Line staff who direct and design the public programs. Consistent with its history, the High Line continues its organic evolution. The following chapter examines the past, present and future of the High Line through the analysis of my interviews with Danya Sherman—former Director of Programs, Education & Community Engagement; Emily Pinkowitz—Deputy Director of Programs & Education; and Abby Ehrlich—Director of Parks Programming at Battery Park City Parks Conservancy, and Director of Parks Programming at Battery Park City Parks Conservancy & Program Consultant for Friends of the High Line.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Interviews

To understand the underlying principles that guided and motivated those who directed and designed the public programs at the Friends of the High Line, I conducted three separate interviews with persons who played key roles in the development of the High Line's public programs. Through analysis of the interviews conducted with Emily Pinkowitz—Deputy Director of Programs & Education on May 23, 2013, Danya Sherman—former Director of Programs, Education & Community Engagement on May 28, 2013, and Abby Ehrlich—Director of Parks Programming at Battery Park City Parks Conservancy and Play Environment & Program Consultant for Friends of the High Line on July 17, 2013, I was able to reach an important awareness, and discover a number of themes and sub-themes that emerged through our conversations. Thorough reflective examination our conversations revealed five themes that provided insight into the underlying principles that assisted these interviewees in their creation of public programs. The underlying themes that emerged from my conversations were: (a) a Commitment to Create a Welcoming Environment; (b) the Acknowledgement of the Significance of Audience Development; (c) a Dedication to High Standards in Programming; (d) the Recognition of a Unique Space; and (e) Acknowledging Future Growth Opportunities and Improvements. A discussion of each of these themes follows.

THEME 1: WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

The first theme that emerged from the interviews conducted with public programming staff and consultants at the High Line, was a commitment to create a welcoming environment for all High Line visitors. Abby Ehrlich, Play Environment &

Program Consultant for Friends of the High Line, summarized this by saying “the primary goal is that everyone feel welcome, truly welcome” (personal communication, July 2013). All three interviewees discussed significance of symbolically offering an invitation to the public to visit and participate in High Line activities and special events. The invitation to participate in public programming may be a literal invitation—as in a verbal welcome, website posting or through more subtle, programmatic details. Ms. Ehrlich expanded on some of the symbolic versions of these invitations, as having ample supplies and welcoming programmatic messaging:

As far as supplies and equipment, it may sound silly, but means having enough children’s scissors and adult scissors if you are doing art, etc. You need to be really prepared.... Along with that, in the theme that everyone feel welcome is that we think about what it is that is the message of your program? If the message is that you already need to be good at something, I believe you have undone the first philosophy that everyone is welcome. You can’t expect expertise. Unless it is a registration class and you make it known. If it is storytelling, you have to have shade. You have to have the right kind of stories for the right kind of audience. (personal communication, July 2013)

All interviewees agreed that creating a welcoming environment was an essential underlying principle to the High Line’s success. The following section addresses the analysis of our conversations, and the three sub-themes that emerged as avenues to generate a welcoming environment: (a) making sure there were opportunities for everyone, (b) offering free programming, and (c) creating strong, concerted efforts to extend special invitations to New Yorkers and locals.

Sub-theme: Opportunities for Everyone

Creating many points of entry into the public programs at the High Line was a goal shared by all three of my interviewees. The sheer number of public programs

detailed on the High Line’s website demonstrates the organization’s dedication to a diverse and rich programmatic menu. Seven distinct categories of public programs are listed, each with multiple programs as a part of its opportunities: Kids, Art Programs, Education, Food Programs, Live!, Teens, and Tours & Talks. Danya Sherman, the former Director of Programs, Education & Community Engagement emphasized the importance of offering varied visitor experiences:

Having a diverse set of programs is something that I think is really important for parks and places to have. Going to the web site, you see there’s something for everyone. I think that’s important for parks and programs. It’s important that the programs are accessible to a variety of people who like to do a lot of different things. So there needs to be a lot of different points of entry. (personal communication, May 2013)

Ms. Sherman deepened her explanation regarding the importance of offering a diverse menu of programming. Specifically, that her department has made enthusiastic efforts to provide opportunities for people with varying interests and backgrounds: “When we are thinking about whether a program should stay or not we evaluate it under certain guises like whether it will attract people of different cultural backgrounds” (personal communication, May 2013). A dedication to diverse programming for diverse audiences was essential to Ms. Sherman’s decisions when creating her department’s calendar of events.

Emily Pinkowitz, Deputy Director of Programs & Education, also expanded on the idea of offering varied High Line visitor experiences through her discussion of Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences theory (see Gardner, 2011). She acknowledged the importance of creating wide-ranging points of entry for different types of learners. Ms. Pinkowitz stated,

It's also important to me that we have activities that appeal to many types of learners. A program that has different points of entry is what I want. It is great when active kinetic learners can enjoy a program alongside people who are more mathematical, spatial, or artistic. Really paying attention to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. (personal communication, May 2013)

Likewise, Ms. Pinkowitz acknowledged that the public may use the High Line for varied reasons, and that it may be perceived to have different identities for different people. She explained that the High Line holds identities as both a public space as well as a cultural institution, and acknowledged the complexities of creating programming that honors all of its identities and the needs of those visitors. Ultimately, the goal is to create a welcoming environment for all High Line visitors. Ms. Pinkowitz says,

The High Line is in a middle ground in between a cultural institution and a park. So when we are developing programming, I go back and forth on how much it needs to fit into a particular educational theme.... People use parks for all different reasons, I think we need to be open to providing them activities that bring people to the park. So *Lawn Time* is just about giving toddlers and caregivers a space to explore different things; play with bubbles and sing. It doesn't have to be only stories about nature. It's about creating a welcoming space. (personal communication, May 2013)

The High Line sees visitors of all income levels, tastes, interests and family structures. Abby Ehrlich noted that in the original stages of creating the format for the public programs they thought about creating opportunities for as many types of users as possible, including volunteers, teachers, college students, educators, casual visitors, traditional and nontraditional family groups:

We talked a lot about working with the school groups. We created internship so we could reach the teens and college students. And we reached the casual visitors by using docents and greeters. We put together a curriculum and training for docents and greeters. (personal communication, July 2013)

She also identified that one of the exciting products of the High Line serving as a cultural institution as well as a public space is that it attracts many generations and entire

families to its programs. In creating a welcoming environment, Ms. Ehrlich suggested that it is essential to remember that welcoming programming provides opportunities for people of all ages to learn from each other:

You have to present content that is appealing to all ages to the people who come.... One of the great joys of life is doing activities that are engaging and connecting with some expertise, also be able to do it hands-on and do it with your own peer group, but also if you are part of an international family; with grandma, children, step-children, you don't always want to be separated by age. Programming for all ages is very organic. (personal communication, July 2013)

Ms. Ehrlich's commitment to family programming not only acknowledged the reality of mixed age groups who make up the visitors at the High Line, but also offers these groups exciting and engaging opportunities to learn and grow together.

Sub-theme: Free Programming

The second sub-theme that emerged as an avenue to generate a welcoming environment was the importance of breaking down financial barriers that may prohibit an individual or family from participating in public programming. Danya Sherman clearly expressed this philosophy when she made the statement, "Our department thinks a lot about people who are underserved or less advantaged and thinking about programs that may be interesting to them" (personal communication, May 2013). Emily Pinkowitz supported this sentiment by stating the following:

I think having free programming is important and is one of the great successes of the High Line. Having regular drop-in programs once a week, you can get a combination of people who are there. There are people who came for the program and people who just showed up and it can feel really good. If you are an institution who charges \$15 per person, and you have 2 kids and 2 adults it is going to cost \$60, they probably aren't going to come once a week. A lot of museums have monthly programs as opposed to weekly programs for that reason. (personal communication, May 2013)

Although the High Line does host some private fundraising and facility rental events that are exclusive and have a cost associated with them, all of the High Line's public programs are free and open to the public. Due to the High Line's unique design as a narrow, elevated walkway, the designers of public programming have felt it especially important to create free and accessible opportunities. Danya Sherman addresses this, "All of our programs are free and drop in because of the walkway feeling. We wouldn't want people to be walking along the High Line and see something that they aren't invited to come to" (personal communication, May 2013).

Sub-theme: Invitations to New Yorkers & Locals

As successful as the High Line has been internationally, all three of my interviewees expressed that it has been important from the beginning that New Yorkers, especially Chelsea residents, feel welcome. Danya Sherman expressed this sentiment "Because the High Line is such a tourist destination, we see that programs are a way to really cultivate the New York community" (personal communication, May 2013). All three interviewees emphasized the importance of making intentional efforts to ensure that the needs of local residents are both assessed and addressed. Abby Ehrlich shared her perspective on the beginnings of the High Line, specifically regarding Danya Sherman's work to include its local neighbors' needs and voices in programming plans:

Outreach was always a really important part of the definition of the department because of the demographics of the High Line area. The demographics of Chelsea are about as dramatic as any of the 5 boroughs because there is extreme poverty and extreme privilege. Thinking always in terms of not just audience development in the typical fashion, as in you want people there and you want people to know about it and all of that, but how do you let the people who are playing in chain link fence playground housing development two blocks away

know that they can take the kids up for a very nice walk up on the High Line? Danya made great inroads there working with public housing authority and people who take the time to sit down and talk together. It can be a little daunting as you are coming from this new flashy space and they might mistake you for a flashy Chelsea art gallery. You have to really prepare and do good research and come in with a very nice, modest invitation of what could be. See if they want to come down for a private tour, or could we come down and talk at one of your community meetings etc. Raising that consciousness of everyone on the staff that some people are easier to reach than others. That has to be not a huge issue, but at least a consideration when thinking about things. You have to consider all of the slices of the pie. (personal communication, July 2013)

The High Line's relationship with New Yorkers has not only been important to the public programs, but has driven the decisions made around the types of programs the High Line considers and creates. A concerted focus on creating programs for New York City residents was present during the High Line's fledgling years, though a more intentional growth of this philosophy has occurred over the time. Danya Sherman disclosed,

We have started an initiative to cultivate relationships with the residents who live in the nearby public housing. That has been a really specific target audience. We have created really specific public programs around those ideas. That was the initial thought, and we think those programs have the possibility to grow to work with all kinds of different people. (personal communication, May 2013)

There is an overlap between the goal to invite New Yorkers and, in particular, local residents to the High Line with the second underlying theme: Audience Development. Emily Pinkowitz likened the importance of inviting locals to the High Line to a mission. Ms. Pinkowitz stressed,

Aside from that educational mission, my mission is also to foster a welcoming environment for young people and families on the park. Specifically, focused on New Yorkers. I'm most excited about inviting local residents, especially the low-income residents that live in the nearby housing project, and lower Manhattan and New York residents. The High Line has been such a great success, and has attracted people from all over the world, which is fabulous. At the same time, while it's a tourist attraction, we want it to be a resource and a place for New

Yorkers and hoping it's a place that they want to come back to over and over again. (personal communication, May 2013)

Creating a welcoming environment is an essential underlying principle that has guided and motivated Ms. Sherman, Ms. Pinkowitz, and Ms. Ehrlich in the creation of the public programs at the Friends of the High Line. This attitude can be likened to the program coordinators thinking of themselves as being a host to all their visitors. Abby Ehrlich said it well, "I love trying new things and having the expectation that if you put out great quality, and you think of yourself as a good host, it is going to work out" (personal communication, July 2013).

THEME 2: AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

The second theme Ms. Sherman, Ms. Pinkowitz and Ms. Ehrlich stated as important to the success of the High Line's public programs was the significance of audience development, sometimes referred to as participation-building (Parker, 2012, p. 4). Susan Parker, in her 2012 report, *Building Arts Organizations that Build Audiences*, defined participation-building as any of the following: "Broadening audiences (attracting more audience members like those currently attending), deepening them (enriching the experience of participants), or diversifying them (bringing new groups into the fold)" (p. 4). Donna Walker-Kuhne, wrote a book *Invitation to the Party: Building Bridges to the Arts, Culture and Community* (2005). This work covers envisioning, planning, and building audiences. In her work, Ms. Walker-Kuhne defined audience development as:

Cultivation and growth of long-term relationships, firmly rooted in a philosophical foundation that recognizes and embraces the distinctions of race, age, sexual orientation, physical disability, geography and class. It is also the

process of engaging, educating and motivating diverse communities to participate in a creative, entertaining experience as an important *partner* in the design and execution of the arts. (Walker-Kuhne, 2005, p. 10)

Through conversations with Ms. Ehrlich, Ms. Sherman and Ms. Pinkowitz, it is apparent the High Line values and has been and is steadily becoming even more focused on cultivating long-term relationships with its visitors. Their goals aim to broaden, deepen, and diversify audiences. In the following section, I discuss three different phases and audience development approaches that the Friends of the High Line programmatic leaders experienced in their time with Friends of the High Line: (a) creating programs that encourage repeat visitors, (b) participating in community engagement, and (c) cultivating relationships and establishing community ownership:

Create programming that reflects the interests and culture of your target audience. Allow it to be a collaborative process. Nurture and cultivate your new relationships carefully and lovingly. Follow up every step of the way; continue cultivation until new audiences are bringing other constituents to your events. (Walker-Kuhne, 2005, p. 7)

Sub-theme: Repeat Visitors

Having a diverse, and attractive menu of programmatic options is one of the ways Friends of the High Line staff aim to attract repeat visitors. Danya Sherman disclosed, “I think an overarching goal is getting people to come back to the park over and over again and having meaningful experiences so they feel more connected to the space” (personal communication, July 2013). Walker-Kuhne shared the repeat visitor vision of the former artistic director of the Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival, George C. Wolfe. Wolfe likened attracting repeat visitors to their productions to a satisfying restaurant experience:

You're walking down the street and you pass your favorite restaurant. As you pass by, the aroma of your favorite dish is so strong that you have to go inside and order it. You're too hungry to take it home. So you sit down and eat it and it tastes good! Since you're there, you decide, 'Maybe I'll try another dish.' The first dish was so satisfying, you're confident that other dishes on the menu will be, too. That's how we want you to think about The Public. We want to be your favorite *cultural* restaurant. Come and feast, and we will feast with you. (Walker-Kuhne, 2005, p. 66)

The first step in gaining the loyalty of repeat visitors was seen in deepening and enriching the experience of the visitors who were already interested in attending public programming events. The long-range goal has been to attract a wide variety of visitors, including locals, and find ways to keep them coming back again and again. Emily Pinkowitz discussed how having drop-in programming helped to contribute to the High Line's goal of having visitors repeatedly experience and grow from the High Line's programs:

I think the general model of having drop-in programming on the park with different themes is a great one. I think kids who come to a place over and over again over their lifetime feel a sense of ownership over a space that extends into adulthood.... The way that I approach my job is that I am interested in creating opportunities for New Yorkers to enjoy the park over and over again, for different reasons. (personal communication, May 2013)

The weekly programming format of many of the family programs that the Friends of the High Line hosts lends itself to having unique experiences with each visit. To specifically attract New Yorkers to engage on a regular basis took some more investigation. To better understand the needs and wants of locals, The Friends of the High Line participated in community engagement.

Sub-theme: Community Engagement

Community engagement served as an important tool for Friends of the High Line to begin to cultivate longer-term relationships with city residents by broadening, deepening, and diversifying its audiences. Ultimately, having a visitor base that comes back to enjoy the park multiple times is only one component of the Friends of the High Line's goals. The interviews revealed that the organization also aimed to attract a diverse set of visitors, but they were especially interested in serving New Yorkers and the individuals who lived in the neighborhood that the structure wove through. Danya Sherman declared, "Even though the attendees aren't necessarily from New York, there is still an element of supporting the city first in those programs" (personal communication, May 2013). Through the use of a survey, the Friends of the High Line discovered that many New Yorkers and local residents were not utilizing or visiting the High Line. Ms. Sherman stated,

We have been doing community engagement work for a while, but it is a relatively new set of standardized programs we are developing. We are still developing what those standardized programs are. The initial idea was that we were finding that residents in the public housing near the High Line weren't coming as much and we wanted to find out why. We got funding to do a yearlong survey and listing initiative to understand why that would be and to broadly look at our visitor demographics and see if there were patterns of groups in New York who were not coming to the High Line and why. (personal communication, May 2013)

There was no question that the High Line was a prevalent part of Chelsea and catalysts of major change in the area. With the intention of engaging with locals as neighbors, it was essential to understand the community's idea and the qualities of a thriving community. To specifically attract and retain the attention of locals to the High Line, it became essential to understand their needs. Danya Sherman expressed, "We are trying to understand how we can help unite lots of different types of people in the city

who don't interact as much and how we can be a resource for those people in different ways" (personal communication, May 2013). Tiwari, Lommerse, and Smith's (2014) compilation *M² Models and Methodologies for Community Engagement* define a strong community in this way:

In its strongest form, the community can take on structure that further contributes to the sense of community. This structure allows for the individuals to partake in decision-making on behalf of their community, in which they are represented and feel ownership (Ragin et al. 2008). The more this structure is developed, the more likely that the community as a whole, as well as the individuals, will endure (Ragin et al. 2008), and therefore, grow collectively. (p. 7)

To more clearly understand how to best serve locals, the Friends of the High Line "decided as an organization to make a more concerted effort to try to develop relationships with groups of people that are underserved by the High Line" (personal communication, May 2013). Danya Sherman revealed more about the process of growing the community engagement emphasis at Friends of the High Line,

Philosophy-wise, the biggest change has been around introduction of all of the community engagement work. It's not really a change in philosophy, as personally I have always been really interested in community engagement, but I didn't know how to do it. Once we did the survey, we figured out how to do it. That has pushed us in a new direction. We have a new community engagement person on staff and that has pushed us in a new direction with the programming. That's the biggest change. In the future I think it will continue to grow. (personal communication, May 2013)

Sub-theme: Cultivating Relationships & Community Ownership

If an organization successfully broadens, deepens, and diversifies its audiences, then it can ultimately lead to cultivating long-term relationships and inspiring important community ownership in that organization. Danya Sherman shares, "Helping ensure that

the park stays vibrant for a long time is contingent on having a group of people who live nearby who feel as though the park is theirs and will take care of it in the long term” (personal communication, May 2013). Community engagement was one of the tools that Friends of the High Line employed to build relationships in order to inspire a sense of deeper ownership in the park. Emily Pinkowitz eloquently expressed how inspiring a deep sense of connection has driven public programming decisions:

There was just a big grant for Central Park, and the person who gave remembered coming to the park as a child. That was the driving force for giving 30 million dollars to the Central Park Conservancy. Ownership means different things, not just about money but a place that belongs to you. That is my goal. To create positive experiences and reasons for kids to want to come to the park is so they feel a connection to the place. I don’t think that feeling ever totally leaves once it has been imprinted. (personal communication, May 2013)

Danya Sherman discussed the significance of a strong High Line community and the community’s place in its long term mission, “Friends of the High Line mission includes the words ‘to cultivate a vibrant community around the park’, that is what programming relates to” (personal communication, May 2013). Danya continued to describe the ways in which the High Line endeavors to create a vibrant community on the High Line and for New York:

In some ways I believe that all of our work is community engagement work, and that is something we are thinking a lot about. We’re cultivating a group of people who see the park as theirs and use it in different ways. Who feel a sense of ownership of it and who want to come back over and over again. We want to cultivate ways where people can meet each other, the value of public space helping people interact with people who are different than themselves and who they might not normally get the opportunity to interact with and develop a sense of understanding and pride about that. (personal communication, May 2013)

Tiwari, Lommerse, and Smith (2014) note, “Healthy communities are those places where belonging is valued, where the connections between individuals, families and the environments of their lives are as important as the life forces within” (McMurray & Clendon 2011, p. 5); (Tiwari, Lommerse, & Smith, 2014, p. 7). Using Tiwari, Lommerse and Smith’s definition as a measure, the High Line’s programmatic and organizational goals are inspiring connections, and directly contributing to the overall sense of health within the community.

THEME 3: HIGH STANDARDS IN PROGRAMMING

Another reoccurring theme that emerged during my interviews with Danya Sherman, Emily Pinkowitz, and Abby Ehrlich was a desire to strive for excellence in all public programs presented on the High Line. This dedication to high standards appeared in various forms. What emerged were the desires to: (a) identify and fulfill needs for arts, nature, and other programming, (b) provide opportunities that were open-ended and inquiry-based, (c) create experiences that were unique and fun, and (d) evaluate the effectiveness of techniques, strategies, and overall performance of the public programs. In the following section I address how each of these themes surfaced in the conducted interviews.

Sub-theme: Fulfilling Needs

One of the most important aspects of making sure there is a high standard of programming being delivered by an organization is to ensure there is a real need for the programming being offered. Danya Sherman explained in her May 2013 interview, “A lot of the educational programming develops out wanting to be a resource for people,

provide a service, and to help people develop an understanding the High Line better” (personal communication, May 2013). Fulfilling needs was a primary goal of the Friends of the High Line staff. Emily Pinkowitz explained the two ways she identifies needs: (a) making observations regarding the types of activities people are participating in and attracting, and (b) to ask people what they need.

The first way Ms. Pinkowitz indicated that she identified programming needs was through dedicated observations of the space and the programs: “Look at the programming that you offer, and see if there’s a major gap in terms of demographics” (personal communication, May 2013). Ms. Pinkowitz explained one scenario where the High Line staff’s observations contributed to changes in the public program schedule by adding programming for toddlers and their caregivers: “For example with our toddler program, people were seeing toddlers and their caregivers up on the park. The first time we did a program, we didn’t do any publicity and there were almost 70 people who showed up.”

The self-guided trip program was developed after the Friends of the High Line staff acquired real visitor numbers through the use of a self-registration form. By observing trends and aided by actual data, the staff responded with an official self-guided tour program:

The reason we are starting self-guided trips is because we created a self-guided registration form and discovered there were around 6,000 students and teachers leading self-guided trips a year. That was only the people who registered for the trips. There are a lot of people who go up on the park on their own and we aren’t serving them right now. (personal communication, May 2013)

The second way of identifying visitor needs is to ask people what they need. Ms. Pinkowitz emphasized that she took the approach of communicating with a local school and discovering their needs through direct inquiry: “With PS-33, I went to them and asked them how we could support what they are doing already” (personal

communication, May 2013). This approach also worked well with local residents, specifically teens: “For the teen programming, we interviewed 800 residents in the local housing projects and they said they wanted more programming for teens. Specifically, they wanted opportunities to garden and opportunities to plan events” (personal communication, May 2013). The following section discusses the community-based arts programming as well as the nature and garden programming developed in response to the community request.

Arts & Community-Based Arts Programs

The Friends of the High Line works diligently to both attract millions of global visitors and serve its local community. Situated in Chelsea, a thriving arts district in New York, locals as well as tourists have experienced cutting edge art in this neighborhood for years prior to the popularity of the High Line, yet lacked community arts programming on this scale. Since its grand opening, the High Line has brought a new level of arts, arts education, and specifically community-based arts education to the area. The organization’s blog entitled *Public Art: The First Five Years of the High Line* listed the public arts work for all of the High Line’s operating years. This included,

A wide array of artwork including site-specific commissions, exhibitions, performances, video programs, and a series of billboard interventions. We invite artists to think of creative ways to engage with the uniqueness of the architecture, history, and design of the High Line and to foster a productive dialogue with the surrounding neighborhood and urban landscape. (Tickle, 2014)

After further investigating definitions of community-based art and community-based art education, I found Krensky and Lowe Steffen’s (2009) description to be inclusive of the remaining public programming on the High Line, and the description of the offerings noted in the Tickle blog post. Krensky and Lowe Steffen state:

“Community-based art education (CBAE)... places art in a community context. In essence, CBAE is community art used as both a creative practice and a teaching method to fulfill educational objectives ranging from creative self-expression to competency with discipline-specific standards” (Krensky & Lowe Steffen, 2009, p. 12).

On the High Line, visitors find occasions to participate in programming that emphasize creative practices as well as educational objectives. These wide-ranging arts programs have goals encompassing self-expression, nature appreciation, art history, art appreciation, and investigative play. Through these uniting experiences, it could be argued that the High Line has created a sense of community amongst its viewers. Abby Ehrlich, program director for Battery Parks Conservancy and consultant for the public programs on the High Line, expanded on this topic when discussing Battery Park programs:

One of the great beauties of working in programming is it is a very natural way to celebrate our differences and similarities. You don't know how much fun it is to draw boats on the river until you try it. We literally have a city bus driver who pulls his bus over and takes art classes with us on his lunch breaks. There's just no way you would know that you have that common interest or enjoyment of something until it happens. You have to keep putting it out there. Some people like coming to the salsa dancing because they like watching, others used to do it as teenagers and they can't imagine the good fortune that they can now come and do it for free, some remember it as part of their professional travel, it may be part of their ancestry, etc.... So we are a catalyst for things that are so much more important, such as enjoying life and enhancing city life, and getting along together. Now I look at all bus drivers differently. (personal communication, July 2013)

Fulfilling the community's needs for high quality community-based arts programming was important to Friends of the High Line. The reasons for offering arts programming in the Chelsea neighborhood of New York City were varied and plentiful,

however Krensky and Lowe Steffen (2009) articulated a most particularly powerful reason for providing community-based arts focused programs for youth:

Two national studies, *Coming Up Taller: Art and Humanities Programs for Children and Youth at Risk* and *Part of the Solution: Creative Alternatives for Youth*, found that community-art programs provide unique opportunities for youth to envision and actualize more positive futures for themselves and their communities. These programs are using the arts to ‘enrich, transform and even save lives. And in so doing they help to address some of society’s greatest challenges, especially those involving youth.’ Indeed, community art as community cultural development is being used to address issues ranging from culture wars to the environment. (p. 6)

Nature & Gardening Programs

All the interviewees were in agreement that there was a distinct need for nature programming in the High Line’s menu of programs. Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* expanded on the reason for nature-based programming, “In the space of a century, the American experience of nature has gone from direct utilitarianism to romantic attachment to electronic detachment” (Louv, 2005, p.16).

New York is one of the largest and most important cities in the world. In this city, skyscrapers and concrete are plentiful. Even within these concrete landscapes, there are opportunities to teach about nature. Richard Louv (2005) discussed this sort of urban wild:

On its face, New York City may not appear natural, but it does contain all manner of hidden, self-organizing wild places, from the organisms secreted within the humus of Central Park to the hawks that circle above the Bronx. In this sense, a city complies with the broadest laws of nature; it is natural (as a machine is a part of nature), but wild in its parts. (p. 8)

The High Line owns a unique history as a thriving rail line, eventually abandoned, and taken over by nature to become a thriving wild-seeded, and unplanned garden. Eventually, the elevated space was repurposed into a thriving public space that was both designed by a famous landscape architect and cared for by professional gardeners. For these many reasons, the High Line is ripe location for nature education and teaching about the urban wilderness. Emily Pinkowitz expanded, “The reason why the nature programming we do is so important is because not everyone has the firsthand experience with nature” (personal communication, May 2013).

Emily Pinkowitz reflected on her youth, and her relationship with nature as a native New Yorker:

I grew up in New York and as a child, one of the only reasons I was ever outside was because a friend of mine had a country house that they took me to. My brother basically never spent any time outside, and a lot of people I grew up with never spent any time in nature. (personal communication, May 2013)

Ms. Pinkowitz gave the landscape architect credit for the role he played in creating a space that can be utilized for nature and gardening programs, “You get to see the plants go through the changes over the seasons and that is by design. They designed it so that you could see the changes in a way you rarely see in New York” (personal communication, May 2013).

At the time of the interviews, the High Line hosted Wild Wednesdays a nature-based program for children and families and integrated gardening projects into their Green Corps and Youth Corps programs. When asked if she would take this type of programming to other cities if the opportunity arose, Danya Sherman replied, “Wild Wednesday is a program that I would want to bring to other city programs because there is a need for environmental education” (personal communication, May 2013).

Sub-theme: “Well thought out, well planned, and open-ended”

This section is based on a quote that High Line Consultant Abby Ehrlich offered in our July 2013 interview. Abby stated: “Creativity needs to be well thought out, well planned and open-ended” (personal communication, July 2013). Throughout the interview process, it became clear that the High Line programming had evolved considerably in the handful of years it has been in operation. The shift in philosophy behind the types of arts projects that were presented for visitors has transitioned from a more didactic format to an evolving open-ended format. Emily Pinkowitz discussed the public programs beginning years:

There has been a change around our philosophy towards what the arts program could be. The programs in the past used to be more didactic. For example ‘Today we are making wind chimes!’ or ‘Today we are making shakers!’ Even though it wasn’t formulaic, as in there wasn’t necessarily a template on how to do it which tells you where the pieces go. What we found was that the people came and went pretty quickly. They finished their project, and went on their way. (personal communication, May 2013)

In summer 2011, the Friends of the High Line made their first bold step towards offering open-ended arts activities by introducing a crate of industrial-themed play materials to their weekly programs, the Children’s Workyard Kit. According to a review written by KaBoom, a non-profit dedicated to ensuring that all kids get a childhood filled with the balanced and active play needed to thrive, “The Workyard Kit has no ‘right’ solution. It’s not a puzzle. It’s designed for open-ended prompts that help children think spatially, use their imaginations, and work collaboratively” (Taylor, 2013). Abby Ehrlich, who helped create the Workyard Kit, described the open-endedness of the product:

It was important there were loose parts. Not all kids are builders so it gave those kids other things to do; the kids are ‘pretenders’ who aren’t going to benefit from building things. So there were pails, and rocks, which could be imagined as anything, they could be ‘eggs’ that they are gathering, or ‘fish’ or ‘money’ or whatever. (personal communication, July 2013)

In 2012, in order to engage visitors in a deeper way, Ms. Pinkowitz continued the shift and focused on creating a menu of arts activities that reflected a more open-ended format. Ms. Pinkowitz provided “materials and a general framework of an invitation but beyond that, there was a lot more room for kids to create their experience” (personal communication, May 2013). She provided an example of one of these open-ended activities:

For example, one day it was hot so I brought out big tubs of water and different materials like balsa wood and corrugated plastic and tape, etc. and explained that we were going to make boats and float them. It was up to the kids to make the boat. (personal communication, May 2013)

Ms. Pinkowitz found that these types of open-ended activities served the High Line’s visitors well: “As a result, the kids tended to stay longer and stay actively engaged in the project” (personal communication, May 2013).

Sub-theme: Unique & Fun

The High Line has become well-known for attaining its goal of creating both unique and fun programming. Danya Sherman commented, “We definitely think about the High Line as an unusual space and holds an unusual place in people’s minds. We think about how programming can add to that in creative new ways since our space is so unique” (personal communication, May 2013). The following section discusses the importance of creating unique and fun programming, something that is essential in ensuring a high standard of public programming for a space like the High Line. Danya

Sherman expanded, “In terms of programming content, we always aim to have a high quality experience in mind” (personal communication, May 2013).

Selecting artists and guests to contribute to the public programs calendar is key to delivering both a unique and fun experience: “We wouldn’t book someone we haven’t seen or come highly recommended by someone we trust because we want the experience of each program to be memorable and that is fun and cool” (personal communication, May 2013). Abby Ehrlich agreed with Danya when it came to selecting guest artists, “I audition all of the performers. I have to see how they do it. You can audition the greatest performers in the world, but if they are jerks and want to be in a club, sorry it doesn’t work” (personal communication, July 2013).

Although Ms. Sherman said that delivering unique and fun programming to visitors was a top priority, she said that sometimes goals were in direct opposition to each other: “There is an element of wanting to do things that are unique, although I think there is a tension sometimes between wanting to do something unique and also do some things that people just want to do” (personal communication, May 2013).

Sub-theme: Evaluation

To continue the advancement of high quality public programming, informal methods of evaluation were historically employed by the Friends of the High Line. In their May 2013 interviews, both Danya Sherman and Emily Pinkowitz disclosed some informal standards they have used when observing and critiquing the success of Friends of the High Line public programs. Ms. Pinkowitz disclosed, “When I look around at a program and see diversity in every possible measure, I feel that’s a success” (personal communication, May 2013). Ms. Sherman also contributed:

One is how many people came. Another one is the general sense at the event. Does the audience seem engaged? Do they stay for a long time? Are they connecting with the speaker? Or are they connecting with each other? Does it feel like a vibrant, fun event? Different age ranges could be a goal. Also, the percentage of New Yorkers that come to the event. Also is the group diverse? (personal communication, May 2013)

Emily Pinkowitz offered her vision of a successful program, “With public programs I want to create an event where families from diverse economic backgrounds and diverse cultural backgrounds feel excited about coming and feel welcome when they get there” (personal communication, May 2013). To accurately discern if programs truly meet the standards they set out to meet, the High Line staff decided that a more reliable and official method of measurement was necessary. The Wallace Foundation’s report entitled *Understanding Park Usership* by Chris Walker stressed some of the benefits of using reliable data:

Data on who uses a park can be compared with data on the wider community surrounding the park, to see whether some groups are being missed.... Data on how people use a park can identify which facilities are being over-, under-, or mis-used, facilitating decisions about park investment strategies.... Data on why community members do not use a park can guide direct outreach efforts and identify areas and types of services that need to be improved or changed.... Data on what park features visitors value can help resolve conflicts among groups. (Walker, 2004, pp. 1-2)

The High Line has utilized effective and informal methods of evaluation during the first years of their programming. Abby Ehrlich offered her version of how effective methods of informal evaluations assist in the advancement of programs, “Observe the programs that you do. Take notes, talk to people and fix what needs fixing and improve upon it. If it is all right then highlight it, then and share with people why it is meaningful or successful” (personal communication, July 2013). As of early 2013, the High Line has begun the process of developing and furthering the advancement of their evaluation

techniques using an outside consulting firm's recommendations. More on the evolution of formal evaluation tools at the High Line is discussed in Theme 5: Growth Opportunities & Evaluation.

THEME 4: UNIQUE SPACE

The fourth theme that occurred throughout the interviews was recognition that the High Line is a distinctive space in its history and physical form. As previously discussed, the High Line served as a useful elevated rail line in the Meat Packing District in Manhattan's West Side in the first half of the twentieth century. It was eventually abandoned, ultimately saved, and finally transformed into a park through public advocacy. This history of repurposing permeates the High Line's physical design and programmatic decisions. Abby Ehrlich discussed what part utilizing the unique design and history of advocacy played in her consulting work with the organization:

We incorporated what was there presently to teach about the High Line. Just like if you are standing in front of a Van Gogh, don't start talking about Picasso. It's important to use what is there in the *present* as the touchstone, as the core and the start and the finish of what you are talking about. In this case it was the High Line's history, the High Line's design, about saving the High Line, how the community gets involved, about the nature, and about all of the things that could happen on the High Line. (personal communication, July 2013)

The following section discusses the High Line as a unique space. It details how the decisions and content of the public programming on the High Line are affected by its (a) Unique history, specifically as a rail line and the advocacy required to save the structure; and (b) Unique linear design. Emily Pinkowitz said it well when she explained designing the High Line's public programming, "The content needs to be specific to the place" (personal communication, May 2013). Danya Sherman expanded on this notion

by acknowledging that many of the programs they host are similar to other public parks, but her department's programs are unique as they are crafted specifically to fit the High Line's history and architecture:

The types of programs we have are the types of programs that they do in other cities, but the particular way we do them and their location are pretty specific to the High Line space. A lot of it is carefully manicured to fit to the High Line. (personal communication, May 2013)

Sub-theme: Unique History

The High Line was once a thriving rail line responsible for transporting goods through the West side of Manhattan. Today, we understand the history of the High Line in that it was saved through dedicated advocacy, then repurposed, and is now functioning as an elevated, linear park serving the local community and curious tourists with vibrant programming and stunning views, while continuing to grow. The following section discusses the High Line's unique history of advocacy, its days as a railway, and how these aspects affect public programmatic decisions.

Rail

The High Line served as an essential method of freight transport from the mid-1930s through the 1950s. The remnants of its unique industrial history as a rail line are incorporated, and promoted by the High Line's staff through its public programming and design. A quick look at shop.thehighline.org online store where one can find branded "Official High Line Train Whistles," "High Line Engineer Hats," or see the highly recognizable High Line train track "H" logo marking all products, it is easy to surmise

that the organization embraces their railway history. This attitude extends well into the organization's public programming. In our interview, Emily Pinkowitz detailed an example of a special program that embraced the High Line's distinct history as a train route,

One example is our Halloween programming. Most places have a Halloween celebration, but not every place has an 18' haunted train that was built by school children that runs along the track. It wouldn't make as much sense anywhere else, since the High Line has a history as a rail. (personal communication, May 2013)

One of the many memorable experiences that visiting children may have is the opportunity to interact with and learn from the High Line's Children's Workyard Kit. Abby Ehrlich, who operated as a consultant on the High Line Children's Workyard Kit project with designer Cas Holman, indicated how industrial history influenced the design of the product: "The components of the [Children's Workyard Kit were] both industrial and elegant because those were the values that the High Line was most about" (personal communication, July 2013). Ms. Pinkowitz also shared how the unique industrial history of the High Line emerged in this interactive product created specifically for the High Line's public programs. She disclosed, the High Line's Children's Workyard Kit was "developed specifically with the High Line in mind. It echoed the industrial history and used authentic materials" (personal communication, May 2013).

Advocacy

The High Line structure was saved from demolition and repurposed to become a valued New York landmark thanks to the dedicated advocacy of two local residents Joshua David, a former travel writer, and Robert Hammond, former entrepreneur. The

process of saving the High Line was not easy, and the two founder's tenacity remains a part of the High Line's unique legacy:

'At first, it was a real uphill battle,' says Hammond. 'Nobody knew anything about the High Line or what it was. Our initial goal was to stop it from being torn down. There was not a lot of support, so we started building awareness in the community.' (McNamara, 2009)

McNamara (2009) quoted Robert Hammond, the founder and former Executive Director at the Friends of the High Line in her article "The Team that Saved the High Line." "Our goal was to preserve Manhattan's industrial heritage," says Hammond, "It's things like the High Line that make New York and other great cities interesting" (McNamara, 2009).

Danya Sherman expressed the importance of community advocacy in the history of the High Line. She emphasized that this history continues to permeate throughout the programmatic message, "The story of advocacy is what is underlying. As in how the High Line got saved. We teach all of our docents to include this in their tours and it is included in all of our talks" (personal communication, May 2013).

Sub-theme: Unique Linear Space

The High Line is a unique repurposed structure with a history as a raised railway. The design of the physical structure towers 30' in the air and currently spans one mile in length (with proposed plans to expand it approximately another half mile). Its long, narrow, ribbon-like structure has gained much attention and inspired J-Crew clothing brand collection to label the space the "Park in the Sky" in their special High Line clothing collection (Rodriguez, 2013). The "Park in the Sky" brings visitors elevated

perspectives on the cityscape and allows vistas not normally accessible at street level. Emily Pinkowitz emphasized, “The views from the High Line are incredible because of the fact that you are in New York” (personal communication, May 2013). These views have become part of the draw for visitors and continue to develop as the High Line’s success has inspired much urban growth around the area. Tourists and commuters alike can wander through fantastic views of structures designed by internationally known architects such as Frank Gehry, Neil Denari, and Shigeru Ban. Danya Sherman noted that this proximity and access to such architectural works does have some influence on programming, “The ability to see other important famous architectural works while on the High Line is taken into account as well” (personal communication, May 2013).

The architecture of the High Line hosts narrow paths, woven above and within the buildings of Chelsea. This layout creates unique challenges to planning public programming events. Ms. Sherman shares, “A lot of educational decisions relate to the design and the location of the park” (personal communication, May 2013). Limited, linear physical space on the High Line confines and directs programming choices, however Ms. Sherman does not necessarily see this as an exclusively limiting factor. She acknowledges that there are some benefits of a tighter space: “Something about the High Line being narrow, it makes the program more intimate” (personal communication, May 2013).

According to Emily Pinkowitz, the architecture of the High Line has affected the public programming decisions she has made, “All of our programs are confined by the space we are in. Our space is long and narrow” (personal communication, May 2013). However, the space constraints have led to some wise resourcefulness, creative solutions, and programmatic decisions by the High Line staff. One challenge observed by Ms. Pinkowitz was that children and families wanted a place to move and play during their

visit. As Ms. Pinkowitz put it, “We can’t do a lot of things that involve a lot of running” (personal communication, May 2013). To meet the need of providing an open-ended interactive and physical activity, the High Line commissioned the construction of the High Line Children’s Workyard Kit. Ms. Pinkowitz articulated how this initial challenge turned into a creative solution,

The Workyard Kit was developed to give active kids who learn building and moving, something to do on the High Line. It wouldn’t have occurred to us to do that if the High Line had a jungle gym. It was the confined space that inspired that. It had to be something that we could bring out and put away. (personal communication, May 2013)

Other creative solutions, programmatic decisions and policies have been created in response to the unique linear space that makes up the High Line. Ms. Sherman disclosed that the limited space for people to congregate has affected the types of performers she is able to book for events: “We can’t really have big named bands because we don’t have enough space” (personal communication, May 2013). While Ms. Pinkowitz indicated some of her policies on group tours in response to the long linear format of the architecture: “Any tour we give, it can’t be more than 30 kids. We usually divide them into groups of 15, otherwise we can’t hear, because the path is so narrow” (personal communication, May 2013).

THEME 5: GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES & IMPROVEMENTS

In regards to the underlying principles that guide and motivate those who direct and design the public programs at the Friends of the High Line, the final theme that emerged from the interviews was the acknowledgement of future growth opportunities and improvements for programming. The following section discusses the three areas that

the interviewees offered as opportunities for the Friends of the High Line to grow into:

(a) Community engagement, (b) Family-Arts Programming, and (c) Assessment/Evaluation.

Sub-theme: Community Engagement

One area for growth the staff at the Friends of the High Line was developing at the time of the interviews was deepening their community connections in order to better serve locals and the community. Emily Pinkowitz shared a bit about the history of the neighborhood where the High Line is located:

New York is such a diverse place. The High Line is in a neighborhood that has gone through significant gentrification over the last 20 years. But at the same time there is public housing, and many cities in the US who have destroyed their public housing. NY still has a strong public housing system. There is public housing with low-income residents next to lofts that are being sold for millions of dollars. That creates an interesting challenge to create programs that are interesting to a wide swath of people. That is something I think about a lot in everything we do. (personal communication, May 2013)

At the time of the interviews, the Friends of the High Line was in the processes of making community engagement a top priority. These were fledgling years. As Danya Sherman put it, “I feel that everyone understands it important for many reasons” (personal communication, May 2013). To continue the improvement of her programs through community engagement, Emily Pinkowitz utilized multiple sources of inspiration. Seeking examples of outside organizations with cutting-edge community-focused programming helped to inform Ms. Pinkowitz’s programming, “Queens Museum of Art is also a model for me. The way they consider community engagement goals in the development of their programming is really inspirational to me” (personal

communication, May 2013). Reaching out to new and underserved groups in the city is part of the High Line's efforts to involve more of their community. She emphasized her interest in meeting the educational community's needs, "I am putting more energy on building deeper relationships with local schools specifically" (personal communication, May 2013). At the time of the interviews, she was in the process of setting up meetings, listening to their feedback and making appropriate changes to reflect their needs and wants: "I've also started to get feedback from teachers. We had a meet up to see what they wanted for programming. We'll take into consideration their wants from the High Line" (personal communication, May 2013).

The National Coalition of Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD) listed seven recommendations that reflect the common beliefs and understandings of public, or community engagement: (a) Careful planning and preparation, (b) Inclusion and demographic diversity, (c) Collaboration and shared purpose, (d) Openness and learning, (e) Transparency and trust, (f) Impact and action, and finally (g) Sustained engagement and participatory culture (National Coalition of Dialogue & Deliberation, 2010, p. 3). As noted earlier, the Friends of the High Line has recently increased its focus on community engagement. In her blog post entitled the "Power of Programming," Emily Pinkowitz commented on the seventh recommendation of the High Line's new emphasis on maintaining a sustained engagement and participatory culture amongst their organization. Here Emily shares the Friends of the High Line's dedication to sustaining relationships with its neighbors:

We have come to believe that programming, at its best, shares the strengths of our organization with our neighbors, fosters belonging and ownership of the park, empowers and emboldens stakeholders to take action in their neighborhood, and uses programs as a tool to connect people, organizations, and experts from across

the city. Since 2009, we have hosted 154,866 people in more than 2,000 programs and volunteer activities. (“The Power of Programming,” June 13, 2014)

Sub-theme: Family Arts Programming

At the time of the interviews, the Friends of the High Line had a very rich, developed and curated public art program entitled High Line Art. Initiated in 2009, High Line Art has featured site-specific commissions, exhibitions, performances, video programs, and a series of billboard interventions. High Line Art relied primarily on self-guided experiences by visitors. Emily Pinkowitz reflected on the relationship between public programming and High Line Art,

I think that our art programming is underdeveloped. There is a fabulous rotating public art collection on the High Line and we haven’t totally figured out how to capitalize on it. We’ve had grand ideas on how to do that, but we haven’t had the staffing or the resources to do that or really focus on that and make it what it could be. (personal communication, May 2014)

Even though the relationship between Arty Hours and High Line Art was underdeveloped at the time, Friends of the High Line had plans to address this. Emily Pinkowitz highlighted how the new staffing position, dedicated to the Family Program “Arty Hours,” could aid in the process of utilizing High Line Art to engage families: “We have an educator whose job it is to do the Arty Hours this year. So I think she could, to a certain extent, be inspired by the public arts on the park and develop programs around that” (personal communication, May 2014).

Sub-theme: Assessment/Evaluation

To advance the Friends of the High Line’s public programs, and to ensure that the programs best serve current and potential park users, Chris Walker, author of the Wallace Foundation’s report *Understanding Park Usership* (2004), encourages official and measurable methods of gathering data. He states,

Parks managers share an ultimate objective: to ensure that their parks serve their communities the best way possible. Conducting surveys of park users can help managers respond better to community needs, resolve conflicts among groups of park users, and manage park assets more effectively—all keys to maximizing the community benefits of parks. (Walker, 2004, p. 1)

At the time of the interviews, the Friends of the High Line staff was actively working to advance their evaluation process. According to Danya Sherman, 2013 marked the first year of officially evaluating the Friends of the High Line’s public programs. She believes the organization had historically utilized more informal methods of evaluation, however it did not take long for the organization to appreciate the importance of growing their program of assessment and to transition into more robust methods of information gathering: “The reason we hadn’t done it sooner was because no one in the organization had done programming evaluation in the past and didn’t know to do it” (personal communication, May 2013). Ms. Sherman also understood the potential benefits to investigations associated with formal evaluation processes, “We find that it is going to be important for us to step up our evaluation so that our programs can stay fresh, and that we can have numbers to report for grants” (personal communication, May 2013).

Ms. Sherman, saw data collection as a possible tool for creating more relevant programs for the High Line users: “We feel like it is important to do it so that we know

that we aren't coming up with these ideas in a vacuum" (personal communication, May 2013). To create an official program of assessment, Danya and the rest of the management team at the Friends of the High Line made a plan to collect essential data: "We hired a firm to work with us for developing an evaluation system for our events. To date, we have done more anecdotal asking at events and get a sense of what people like" (personal communication, May 2013). Chris Walker (2004) stressed the importance of a formal method of data collection: "Usership surveys are a tremendous potential source of information that can help managers operate their parks more effectively and target parks improvement strategies more strategically" (p. 10).

With the aid of outside evaluation consultants, the Friends of the High Line worked to advance in the development and improvement of its public programs. Accurate data may enable those who develop programs at the High Line to best understand who used the park, and why: "Collecting information systematically from and about park users can do more—providing solid facts about *who* visits a park, *how* they are using park spaces and facilities, *why* some areas are underused, and *what* people value most in a park" (Walker, 2004, p. 10). Ms. Sherman had high hopes for the types of information the High Line could gather with their new systems, and what those surveys could do to inform future public programs decisions:

Practice-wise, I think the new evaluation work will change things a lot. This is the first year where we've had a couple of different years of having a program over and over again. If there's a question of how you decide to keep a program the same from year to year, or if you change things. Or how to keep things fresh? These are important questions for the Programming Department to be asking (personal communication, May 2013).

SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the details of the interviews I conducted with three women who played key roles in the creation of the High Line's public programs. By examining the content of interviews with Emily Pinkowitz–Deputy Director of Programs & Education; Danya Sherman–former Director of Programs, Education & Community Engagement; and Abby Ehrlich–Director of Parks Programming at Battery Park City Parks Conservancy, and Play Environment & Program Consultant for Friends of the High Line, I was able to identify emergent themes and sub-themes within our conversations. The underlying themes that emerged from these conversations were: (a) a Commitment to Create a Welcoming Environment; (b) the Acknowledgement of the Significance of Audience Development; (c) a Dedication to High Standards in Programming; (d) the Recognition of a Unique Space; and (e) Acknowledging Future Growth Opportunities and Improvements. The concluding chapter that follows provides reflections for arts education in community settings and offers thoughts on research extensions and possible future research.

Chapter Five: Reflections for Arts Education in Community Settings

The High Line is currently 1.45 complete miles of public space. Depending on which source you read or with whom you speak, the High Line mile is considered all or any combination of the following: unique city park; non-profit; public space; botanical garden; community gem; art, music and dance studio; date-night site, host to children and family programs; important historical site; architectural feat; high design standard; commuter path; art museum; performance venue; playscape; rail yard; outdoor classroom; hot-spot; and arguably, much, much more. For every reason listed above, I was attracted to the High Line as a place to learn. Examining and understanding the public programs became something that deeply intrigued me. The purpose of this study was to uncover, “What are the underlying principles that guided and motivated those who directed and designed the public programs at the Friends of the High Line and how does the recognition of these principles contribute to our understandings regarding the development of art education within community settings?” In search for the answer to this question, I read pertinent literature, blogs, websites, and identified and interviewed the three individuals who had the most influence on programming the first formative years of the High Line: Danya Sherman—Former Director of Programs, Education & Community Engagement; Emily Pinkowitz—Deputy Director of Programs & Education; and Abby Ehrlich—Director of Parks Programming at Battery Park City Parks Conservancy, and Founding Play Environment & Program Consultant for Friends of the High Line.

The interviews were both fascinating and informative. They provided valuable insights about the central research question I set out to investigate. The first aspect of the research question was, “What are the underlying principles that guided and motivated

those who directed and designed the public programs at the Friends of the High Line?” There were two reasons why this aspect of the question was important. First, I wanted to thoroughly understand the context and work that is required to prepare programs on the community level. Second, I recognized that this aspect of the question was essential in order to advance a field of knowledge for arts educators working in community settings. I theorized that by understanding the anatomy of high profile, non-profit, public programs, such as those on the High Line, future community-arts educators may be better informed in their preparation for program creation and development.

Analysis uncovered five underlying principles that guided and motivated my interviewees in the conception and execution of the High Line’s public programs. Each underlying principle comprises sub-themes that helped to refine the larger picture (See Appendix C). The guiding and motivating principles that surfaced in this study were: (a) a Commitment to Create a Welcoming Environment; (b) the Acknowledgement of the Significance of Audience Development; (c) a Dedication to High Standards in Programming; (d) the Recognition of a Unique Space; and (e) Acknowledging Future Growth Opportunities and Improvements.

The second aspect of the question was, “How does the recognition of these principles contribute to our understanding regarding the development of art education in community settings?” My ultimate goal was to identify what elements and influences are so broadly perceived that they may be applied in a wide abundance of community-based arts education-focused settings. If answers to this question could be identified, then we might be better equipped to initiate, deliver, and increase the overall number of high quality community-arts public programs.

The commitment to create a welcoming environment appeared to be the most discussed point amongst the interviewees. The Friends of the High Line’s efforts to

establish an open environment included actions that ensured there were opportunities for everyone, that they insisted on eliminating financial barriers by offering free programming and making concerted efforts to especially welcome New Yorkers and locals. Donna Walker-Kuhne (2005), wrote in her book entitled *Invitation to the Party: Building Bridges to the Arts, Culture and Community* that any arts organization needs to determine, “Who extends the invitation? What does it look like? What is its form? Are there any caveats? How long is the invitation for? The answers may be found by considering one of the cornerstones of marketing: ‘Know your audience’” (p. 30). Each of the principles and above questions easily translates into a more general community-based arts philosophy. A commitment to create a welcoming environment applies to generating an environment that is accessible and open to all, regardless of the organization. The aim, when possible, is to eliminate financial constraints, understand your goals and audience, and offer special invitations to those you want to make sure participate in the programs.

Another guiding principle that emerged was acknowledging the significance of audience development. This was accomplished at the High Line by creating programming that encouraged repeat visitors, and prioritizing participation in community engagement by cultivating relationships and community ownership. Donna Walker-Kuhne (2005) stated, “Successful audience development requires that we talk to our potential audience, hear what they have to say, and incorporate their ideas into the work of our institutions” (p. 22). Lessons to be translated into future community-arts programming include integrating the community in any community-arts project as soon as possible, truly attempting to understand the target audience’s wants and needs, authentically listening to the audience you aim to serve, and creating opportunities and

reasons for them to want to participate in the programming to encourage them to return again.

The staff that direct and design the public programs at the Friends of the High Line also maintained a strong dedication to high standards in programming. This effort involved creating programs that fulfilled the needs of their participants—mainly by providing free community-focused programming emphasizing the arts and natural sciences. These programs were not only unique and fun but, in the words of Abby Ehrlich, were “well thought out, well planned, and open-ended.” Finally, maintaining a high standard meant that the programs were ultimately evaluated for their effectiveness. In contemplating the development of arts education programs in a community setting, the point of dedicating the project to a high standard of programming cannot be overlooked. Committing to the fulfillment of program’s participants needs, ensuring that all programming has the balance in that it is not only well thought out and well planned, but also fun, is a bonus for quality programming. To ensure that programs evolve in a productive manner, it is essential to evaluate programmatic offerings and analyze results through evaluation techniques.

A major theme that emerged in the interviews was the recognition of the High Line as a unique space. The High Line has a distinctive history as a rail line, translating physically today as a public park, linear, narrow, and long. The High Line is also rare in that it was saved through diligent public advocacy. According to the interviewees, these principles literally shaped the types of programs that were offered. The principle of recognizing how a space may be unique can transform the planning of community-based arts education programs. All spaces have unique qualities and histories. Community-based art educators are encouraged to seek out and utilize the individual qualities in the spaces around them as they undertake community programming. Responding to space

constraints and capitalizing on assets, either historical or physical, may help to engage participants in a deeper way.

The final underlying principle uncovered by this project was the acknowledgement of future growth opportunities and improvements that could be made. It was very important that the staff could see and respond to areas of growth in order to advance the programs on the High Line. At the time of the interviews, Ms. Sherman and Ms. Pinkowitz understood their growth areas to include community engagement, family arts programming, and assessment. All community-arts programs can benefit from this guiding principle. It is difficult to be self-critical, but honestly assessing how a program can improve and evolve is essential to its continued relevance. Abby Ehrlich made a convincing point when discussing the growth opportunities that are made possible by taking a sincere look at the successes or failures of a program, and not being hindered by the personal knowledge of them:

I believe in pilot programs. If you think of everything as a pilot program you can always say “You know what? We tried kite flying and there were too many trees in the way!” It’s ok, it wasn’t a bad thing, you just aren’t going to do it again. Some things take off and you might never have guessed that they would take off. We had a suggestion for a singing circles, that came from a suggestion and I thought to myself, “Well, that’s stupid.” Fourteen years later, it is still going strong. (personal communication, July 2013)

EXTENSIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

In performing this research, I arrived at the conclusion that the knowledge I had gained through this study was just the beginning of further investigations and applications of principles that may guide community-based arts programs such as the High Line or others. Indeed, continued research and focused investigations utilizing the High Line as a

case study would be worthwhile for examining any of the five underlying principles I uncovered in this research. Below, I expand upon and suggest possible extensions and further research for three of the project's five principles: (a) Creating a Welcoming Environment, (b) Audience Development, and (c) High Standards in Programming.

Creating a Welcoming Environment

The staff at the Friends of the High Line share a strong commitment to creating a welcoming environment. Additional questions worthy of study include: What are the most effective practices that encourage visitor participation? Why do participants return on a regular basis, and for what reasons are they committed to the High Line's public programming? What High Line programs see the largest diversity of participants? What locals consciously decide to not visit the High Line, and why? Understanding the answers to these questions would help the Friends of the High Line to create programming that best serves their current participants and inform programming decisions for the future.

Audience Development

Audience development played a major role in the evolution of the High Line's programmatic choices. Continued research and documentation regarding the organization's community engagement processes would help to inform future engagement efforts in a wide range of community-arts focused public programs. Likewise, continued research clarifying the scope and methods of community engagement efforts at the High Line would be specifically valuable. Further, it would be worthwhile to investigate best practices used in cultivating relationships with the local

community. Recommended is a longitudinal study focused on community members who are deeply engaged with the High Line's programs. This study could address participant's attitudes of ownership and pride for the High Line over a series of years. The group I would recommend for this proposed study is the Teen Arts Council (TAC), a group of paid local teens who "design, plan, and produce two events on the High Line each summer... from start to finish, including curation, marketing, outreach, and event production" ("High Line Teens," n.d.).

High Standards in Programming

When focusing on the maintenance of high standards in programming, multiple questions worthy of deeper investigations surface in regards to the High Line. Concerning the sub-theme of fulfilling needs, further investigation into how the High Line came to understand which community needs were to be fulfilled, and investigations into whether or not the arts and nature programs that are currently focused on are, indeed, "fulfilling needs?" Queries into how and if the local's attitudes towards arts and nature are evolving along with the programs would be a worthwhile study. Are the High Line's programs effective? This leads me to ask questions regarding the new standards of evaluation and assessment that were being established at the time of the interviews. What assessment techniques were suggested? Were they useful? How have answers to these assessments changed or affected programming and programmatic decisions? What new programs have evolved from this assessment? What programs have been scaled back or removed altogether? Which ones are considered most successful, and why? Answers to these questions would shed light on the success of the High Line's programming quality standards.

CONCLUSION

Public programs have the power to bring richness, vitality, and novelty to a city while simultaneously serving deeper needs in the community. The Friends of the High Line has been offering programs since its ribbon cutting in 2009, which serve as exemplars of how to do just this. In the words of Abby Ehrlich, Play Environment & Program Consultant for Friends of the High Line, “You can literally make the city a better place through programming” (personal communication, July 2013).

The five principles identified in this study reveal at least part of the recipe for how the High Line consistently achieves such successful programs: (a) Commitment to Create a Welcoming Environment, (b) Acknowledgement of the Significance of Audience Development, (c) Dedication to High Standards in Programming, (d) Recognition of a Unique Space, (e) Acknowledging Future Growth Opportunities and Improvements. These principles contribute to a deeper understanding regarding the development of arts education within community settings. While these principles are derived from the study of one particular example, I suggest that they may be more broad based in their applicability to community-based arts programs and can serve as a model for the creation of exemplar programs in other settings.

As I embark on my own career in community-based arts programming, I intend to test this assertion, designing the programs I create around these principles. I aspire to create programs whose participants feel welcome, invited, and whose ideas are both valued and considered. I endeavor to cultivate relationships and community ownership in these programs and to create opportunities to experience learning in a unique and fun way. I will seek to discover the needs of my participants and fulfill them through well thought out, well planned, and open-ended activities. I will utilize the assets of the space

I am working within. Ultimately, I will value the process of experimentation, by learning from mistakes and utilizing evaluation and assessment to best understand both successes and struggles. I will indeed strive to “make the city a better place through programming.”

Appendices

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interviewees:

Danya Sherman–Former Director of Programs, Education & Community Engagement

Emily Pinkowitz–Deputy Director of Programs & Education

Abby Ehrlich–Director of Parks Programming at Battery Park City Parks Conservancy and Play Environment & Program Consultant for Friends of the High Line

Sample Interview Questions:

A. The Programs:

1. Describe in your words, your job and your part in designing the public programs at the High Line.
2. Are there any reoccurring themes present in the High Line programming?
3. What are the parameters that define a program at the High Line as being successful?
4. Are there any model programs you use as a model to inform future programs at the High Line?
5. Who are the various target audiences for your public programs?
6. What are the factors you consider when introducing a new High Line program?
7. Have there been any changes in the philosophy and practice over the short time the program has been in existence? If so, what motivated the change? If not, what possible changes are considered for the future, and why considered?

B. You Can and Would Want to Take it With You:

1. If you were to suddenly move to another city as the Director of Public Programming, what aspects of the High Line programming or specific programs would you most want to replicate? Why?

2. Which programs and specific activities that you help to coordinate do you believe could work in any location in the US?
3. Is there a guiding philosophy that helps you choose the programs that you create on the High Line?

C. You Can't Take it With You:

1. About what percentage of the High Line's programming relies on its unique aspects? That is, programming that highlights the park's physical features, unique location and signature design and could not be replicated anywhere else because there is no other High Line?
2. What are the specific features that you incorporate on a regular basis?

D. Outside Influences/ Factors:

1. Besides the various specific physical features that affect the types of programs on the High Line, what are some other influences that contribute to your decision making? (Types of park users, the financial backing of the park, public laws, and programs, advertising and merchandising campaigns.)
2. How does New York, as a geographic location, affect the High Line programming?

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

Research Interview Subjects:

Danya Sherman–Former of Programs, Education & Community Engagement

Emily Pinkowitz–Director of Programs & Education

Abby Ehrlich–Director of Parks Programming at Battery Park City Parks Conservancy and Play Environment & Program Consultant for Friends of the High Line

Research Interviews:

In order to better understand the underlying principles that guided and motivated those who directed and designed the public programs at the Friends of the High Line, I interviewed the three primary individuals who were responsible for directing and designing the public programs for Friends of the High Line to date. To record these interviews, I took extensive notes from the phone interviews I conducted with Danya Sherman, the Director of Public Programs, Education and Community Engagement; Emily Pinkowitz, the Deputy Director of Programs & Education at the Friends of the High Line; and Abby Ehrlich, currently the Director of Parks Programming for the Battery City Parks Conservancy and continued Director of Parks Programming at Battery Park City Parks Conservancy and Play Environment & Program Consultant for Friends of the High Line. Below is a compilation of the interviews I conducted with these three research participants.

Emily Pinkowitz, Deputy Director of Programs & Education

May 23, 2013. 4:30 am EDT (Eastern Daylight Time)

Interview Questions for Emily Pinkowitz, Deputy Director of Programs & Education at Friends of the High Line

Juliet:

Can you share with me the names of programs you manage and the sub programs in each of the categories you manage?

Emily:

Education Programs: After School Programs, Partnerships, Self-Guided Tours- Though, we haven't done this yet. We hope to.

Kids Programs: Arty Hours, Lawn Time, Wild Wednesday, Play With Your Food, Haunted High Line Halloween, High Line Workyard Kit

Teen Programs: Green Corps, Teen Arts Council, Summer Youth Corps, After School Programs, Field Trips

Juliet:

Describe in your words, your job and your part in designing the public programs at the High Line.

Emily:

My job is that I am the manager of Education, Teen and Family Programs. The way that I approach my job is that I am interested in creating opportunities for New Yorkers to enjoy the park over and over again, for different reasons.

When I think about the goals of the programming I do, one goal is to take advantage of the High Line as an educational resource. To teach about native ecology, the history of New York, design, architecture and art. Aside from that educational mission, my mission is also to foster a welcoming environment for young people and families on the park. Specifically, focused on New Yorkers. I'm most excited about inviting local residents, especially the low income residents that live in the nearby housing project, and lower Manhattan and New York residents. The High Line has been such a great success, and has attracted people from all over the world, which is fabulous. At the same time, while it's a tourist attraction, we want it to be a resource and a place for New Yorkers and hoping it's a place that they want to come back to over and over again.

My role is that I manage two educators who lead drop-in experiences on the park. They lead 6 field trips a week. We're hoping to extend that next year. One of the

educators works with an afterschool program with a local school, PS-11, one-day a week. We're hoping to extend that.

I also manage all of the teen programming which means I work with two educators, and do a program called the Green Corps, working with 10 teens who live in the neighborhood, or attend local schools. I meet with them and help them with curriculum. I work with the Community Engagement Manager to manage the Teen Arts Council and help the teens produce two teen events on the park this summer.

In the beginning I led all of the tours on the park, and that took a lot of time. Now I am no longer doing that, I am putting more energy on building deeper relationships with local schools specifically.

I have a partnership with the Whitney Museum and PS-33, which is a local school. I met with the second grade teachers in the fall to figure out what they are working on and see how the Whitney and the High Line could create overlap that fits in with their curriculum. We set up a series of field trips that will happen in the fall. The field trips will discuss New York history. What is was like in the past, present and future with the coming of the Whitney museum.

In the spring we'll work with a few gifted and talented classes on "Balance and Motion" and other classes on "Birds." For those trips we'll work with the teachers and see what they want. They'll go to the High Line once, and then the Whitney, and then back to the High Line. We'll have a teaching artist teach the class.

That may be of interest to you, Juliet. We're working with the art teacher. So it's an interesting model. Next year we'll be working with PS-11 doing a similar program, but without the Whitney.

I've also started to get feedback from teachers. We had a meet up to see what they wanted for programming. We'll take into consideration their wants from the High Line.

The last part is Family Programs. I manage a team of teens, college students and part time educators in the summer to produce 3 drop in family programs on the park in the summer through July and August. Wild Wednesday, Arty Hours and Lawn Time.

Juliet:

Are there any reoccurring themes present in the High Line programming?

Emily:

There are content area themes: Native Ecology, New York City history (west side), Park Design/ Architecture and Art. Sometimes we have programs that don't fit into those categories. Lawn Time for example.

The High Line is in a middle ground in between a cultural institution and a park. So when we are developing programming, I go back and forth on how much it needs to fit into a particular educational theme. Because I come from museum studies, I think that things should be thematic and reflect the uniqueness of the High Line. At the same time, because people use parks for all different reasons, I think we need to be open to providing them activities that bring people to the park. So Lawn Time is just about giving toddlers and caregivers a space to explore different things. Play with bubbles and sing. It doesn't have to be only stories about nature. It's about creating a welcoming space.

Juliet:

What are the parameters that define a program at the High Line as being successful?

Emily:

This summer we'll be doing evaluations for the first time. We're figuring out what that means. It breaks down between the different goals. With public programs I want to create an event where families from diverse economic backgrounds and diverse cultural backgrounds feel excited about coming and feel welcome when they get there. When I look around at a program and see diversity in every possible measure, I feel that's a success.

It's also important to me that we have activities that appeal to many types of learners. A program that has different points of entry is what I want. It is great when active kinetic learners can enjoy a program alongside people who are more mathematical, special, or artistic. Really paying attention to Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences.

Juliet:

Are there any model programs you use as a model to inform future programs at the Highline?

Emily:

Teen Arts Council: Brooklyn Museum of Art. They have a great teen night and teen planning committee.

Green Corps: Green City Forest isn't a model, because it is really different. But we look to them.

Family Programs: El Museo and Battery Parks City Parks Conservancy, Brooklyn Bridge Park, I haven't actually seen their programs in person, but I've looked at them. I hope to have more time this summer to check out more programs. Queens Museum of Art is also a model for me. The way they consider community engagement goals in the development of their programming is really inspirational to me.

Juliet: Who are the various target audiences for your public programs?

Drop in Family Programs: New Yorkers under the age of 14 and their caregivers.

Teen Programs: As far as Green Corps our target group is teens who live locally, or connected to local community centers and who go to local schools. The Teen Arts Council is consisted of local teens, but they are programming their public events for local teens and all teens from throughout the city. We want to get teens out on the park.

Educational Programming: It tends to be teens from across the city who come out more than local schools. Local schools see the High Line as more a part of the fabric of their neighborhood, and don't feel the need to book a tour. The Field Trips are generally for schools throughout the city. The Partnerships are for specifically local schools. There are 2 public elementary schools that are close to the High Line: PS-11 and PS-33.

Juliet:

What are the factors you consider when introducing a new High Line program?

Emily:

First thing is need. Is there a hole that needs filling? There are two ways to identify that. One is to look at the activity at the park. Look at the programming that you offer, and see if there's a major gap in terms of demographics. When I started at the High Line, we had a little children's programming and we hired outside consultants to come in and I found that through the work I had done with other organizations, that if you wanted to have a group of people who came on a regular basis, you needed to provide programming at the same time either monthly or weekly. I want to create invitations for people to use the park.

For example with our toddler program, people were seeing toddlers and their caregivers up on the park. The first time we did a program, we didn't do any publicity and there were almost 70 people who showed up.

The other way to identify need is to ask people what they need! With PS-33, I went to them and asked them how we could support what they are doing already.

For the teen programming, we interviewed 800 residents in the local housing projects and they said they wanted more programming for teens. Specifically, they wanted opportunities to garden and opportunities to plan events.

Similarly, afterschool programs, PS-11 approached us.

Self-guided trips. The reason we are starting self-guided trips is because we created a self-guided registration form and discovered there were around 6,000 students and teachers leading self-guided trips a year. That was only the people who registered for the trips. There are a lot of people who go up on the park on their own and we aren't serving them right now.

Juliet:

Have there been any changes in the philosophy and practice over the time your programs have been in existence? If so, what motivated the change? If not, what possible changes are considered for the future, and why considered? I am thinking specifically about your arts programs.

Emily:

I think that our art programming is underdeveloped. There is a fabulous rotating public art collection on the High Line and we haven't totally figured out how to capitalize on it. We've had grand ideas on how to do that, but we haven't had the staffing or the resources to do that or really focus on that and make it what it could be.

We have an educator whose job it is to do the Arty Hours this year. So I think she could, to a certain extent, be inspired by the public arts on the park and develop programs around that.

There has been a change around our philosophy towards what the arts program could be. The programs in the past used to be more didactic. For example 'Today we are making wind chimes!' or 'Today we are making shakers!' Even though it wasn't formulaic, as in there wasn't necessarily a template on how to do it which tells you where the pieces go. What we found was that the people came and went pretty quickly. They finished their project, and went on their way.

Last year when we did the programs, I tried to make the projects more open-ended. I tried to consciously make the project more open-ended. So we had materials and a general framework of an invitation but beyond that, there was a lot more room for kids to create their experience. As a result, the kids tended to stay longer and stay actively engaged in the project.

For example, one day it was hot so I brought out big tubs of water and different materials like balsa wood and corrugated plastic and tape, etc. and explained that we were going to make boats and float them. It was up to the kids to make the boat. We had different models for them to look at. The kids experimented and stayed for a really long time.

That is the direction I would really like to go with our art programming in the future.

Juliet:

If you were to suddenly move to another city as the Director of Public Programming for another organization similar to the High Line, what aspects of the High Line programming or specific programs would you most want to replicate? Why?

Emily:

Most of the things I do I would replicate, too. Not necessarily the content, because the content needs to be specific to the place.

I think having free programming is important and is one of the great successes of the High Line. Having regular drop in programs once a week, you can get a combination of people who are there. There are people who came for the program and people who just showed up and it can feel really good. If you are an institution who charges \$15 per person, and you have 2 kids and 2 adults it is going to cost \$60, they probably aren't going to come once a week. A lot of museums have monthly programs as opposed to weekly programs for that reason.

It depends on what the audience is like for wherever it is. A small local place may get 25-10 kids to come. A large program like ours can get 50-100 kids in a few hours, just because of who we are.

I think the general model of having drop-in programming on the park with different themes is a great one. I think kids who come to a place over and over again over their lifetime feel a sense of ownership over a space that extends into adulthood.

There was just a big grant for Central Park, and the person who gave remembered coming to the park as a child. That was the driving force for giving 30 million dollars to the Central Park Conservancy. Ownership means different things, not just about money but a place that belongs to you. That is my goal. To create positive experiences and reasons for kids to want to come to the park is so they feel a connection to the place. I don't think that feeling ever totally leaves once it has been imprinted.

Juliet:

Which programs and specific activities that you help to coordinate do you believe could work in any location in the US?

Emily:

Drop-in programs. The content would change but the structure could translate into any free place.

Juliet:

About what percentage of the High Line's programming relies on its unique aspects? That is, programming that highlights the park's physical features, unique location and signature design and could not be replicated anywhere else because there is no other High Line?

Emily:

This depends on content vs. actual activities. Would I teach a nature-based program in a place other than the High Line? Yes! But the content would be different because of different plants that grow in different locations.

One example is our Halloween programming. Most places have a Halloween celebration, but not every place has an 18' haunted train that was built by school children that runs along the track. It wouldn't make as much sense anywhere else, since the High Line has a history as a rail.

Juliet:

What are the specific features that you incorporate on a regular basis? Why?

Emily:

The industrial history shows up in the Children's Workyard Kit. It was developed specifically with the High Line in mind. It echoed the industrial history and used authentic materials, but now it is being rebranded, and sold. I like that it is going to be in schools. That is great! Great for the world.

Juliet:

Besides the various specific physical features that affect the types of programs on the High Line, what are some other influences that contribute to your decision-making? (Types of park users, the financial backing of the park, public laws, and programs, advertising and merchandising campaigns, etc.)

Emily:

All of these. Advertising and merchandising campaigns not right now, but maybe in the future. Programming we get funding for is much easier than programming

we don't get funding for. All of our programs are confined by the space we are in. Our space is long and narrow. We don't have a big lawn. The Workyard Kit was developed to give active kids who learn building and moving, something to do on the High Line. It wouldn't have occurred to us to do that if the High Line had a jungle gym. It was the confined space that inspired that. It had to be something that we could bring out and put away.

It's so funny the longer I have been here, the harder it is for me to answer these questions. I feel as though they have been embedded in my hard wiring. I kind of forget about the programs that I might like to do, but I can't do. I don't think outside of the "box," the box being the High Line. There are probably things that I would like to do, that I couldn't do because of limitations, but I can't even remember what they might be.

We can't do a lot of things that involve a lot of running. Any tour we give, it can't be more than 30 kids. We usually divide them into groups of 15, otherwise we can't hear, because the path is so narrow. There are specific places on the park where we can do things. This year's Halloween was the first time we had different activities going on in different areas simultaneously. The programs basically took over the 6 blocks of the High Line. Usually the program has to be confined to a specific spot, so the natural flow of the park can continue as if nothing was occurring.

Juliet:

How does New York, as a geographic location, affect the High Line programming?

Emily:

Because the High Line is in New York, and it has become an international tourist destination, we could have thousands of people on the park at any given time. This makes my life easier. I could do a program at any given time and we can have kids show up. Drop in programs are bound to attract people. Smaller programs have to rely more on a dedicated fan base. The flip side of that is that because the High Line is such a tourist destination, it is more important to do outreach for New Yorkers. This is probably less of an issue in other cities.

The views from the High Line are incredible because of the fact that you are in New York.

The reason why the nature programming we do is so important is because not everyone has the firsthand experience with nature. I grew up in New York and as a child, one of the only reasons I was ever outside was because a friend of mine

had a country house that they took me to. My brother basically never spent any time outside, and a lot of people I grew up with never spent any time in nature and I think the High Line is special because you get to see the plants go through the changes over the seasons and that is by design. They designed it so that you could see the changes in a way you rarely see in New York. So I feel like the programming we do, I feel more compelled to bring kids in and show them what we do than even if the program were in the suburbs. Where people are on their lawns.

The history programs are all about the history of New York City.

New York is such a diverse place. The High Line is in a neighborhood that has gone through significant gentrification over the last 20 years. But at the same time there is public housing, and many cities in the US who have destroyed their public housing. NY still has a strong public housing system. There is public housing with low-income residents next to lofts that are being sold for millions of dollars. That creates an interesting challenge to create programs that is interesting to a wide swath of people. That is something I think about a lot in everything we do.

Juliet:

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Emily:

There will be a Kid's Feature in Section 3. There is a beam exploration area. There are going to be tunnels for crawling and plants integrated into the design. It will be set up for opportunities for the Workyard Kit or story time. The public programs will have to be low key in that area because of the size of the space. We probably won't do a Saturday activity there, but it should be large enough for weekday morning activities. Perhaps a staff person with art supplies, and a play leader could have supplies for kids to do small projects during the weekday.

Juliet:

Where are the Programs happening?

Emily:

Arty Hours and Lawn Time happen at the lawn. Wild Wednesday happens on the East side of the 14th Street Passage. I feel mixed about that. On one hand, I think it's a better learning environment for kids. The Chelsea Market Passage was so crazy. It's one of the busiest sections of the High Line. We couldn't block off the whole thing, and we had to allow space for people to pass. It was really loud and busy. The flipside of that is that we got more traffic, because we were more visible.

A lot of people enter at 14th street and move north, and they don't even see that we have a program at the 14th Street Passage because the entry is slightly north of the activity space. Or they enter at the Chelsea Market Passage and move north and likewise don't see that we have a program. That's also too bad. There's also less interplay between the programs and the food at the 14th Street Passage. At Chelsea Market Passage families could make a day of it. Get an ice cream and go to the program. Now, we're farther away. Last year we had a higher quality experience, but we had less people. It's a tradeoff.

We also didn't put as much effort into publicizing. Two years ago was our first big year, so we were really working to get the word out. I was worried that nobody would know about our new programs that year. Because 2011 exceeded our expectations, in 2012 we figured we couldn't handle any more capacity, so we didn't publicize as much. We still had 50-100 kids per program, so we did fine even without the publicizing.

The Lawn is so great, but if it rains, or even rains the day before, we need to relocate the program, because we don't want to damage the grass or compact the soil. That can be confusing for people. On those days, we need to move the programming to the 14th street passage. If you enter at 23rd street, that can be far away for a kid to walk.

Danya Sherman, Former Director of Public Programs, Education & Community Engagement

May 28, 2013. 12 am EDT (Eastern Daylight Time)

Interview Questions for Danya Sherman, Former Director of Public Programs, Education, and Community Engagement at Friends of the High Line

Juliet: I saw the job description of your future successor. Is it an accurate description of the job you are leaving and did you write it?

The Director of Public Programs, Education, and Community Engagement is responsible for cultivating a vibrant community around the High Line through envisioning, producing, and evaluating unique and memorable public events, activities, and multi-faceted initiatives. Programs seek to engage with diverse groups of neighborhood and wider New York City residents to build a connection with the High Line in unique, creative, and enduring ways. This position is a key member of the Executive team of Friends of the High Line, and is responsible for overseeing the Adult, Kids, Education, Teen, Volunteer, Community Engagement, and other programs both on and off the High Line. Reporting to the Director are four full-time employees and one seasonal, part-time employee who, in turn, manage two part-time educators, two seasonal family program leaders, over twenty teen staff, and a team of event production staff.

Danya:

Yes, I did write it. A couple of small pieces got added by my boss. I do believe it is an accurate job description of what I do. There is one piece that is missing, which is working with the Community Boards. We don't believe it is appropriate for the Director of Public Programs to do anymore, though we're trying to figure out who in the organization should best take on that piece.

Juliet:

I spoke with Emily Pinkowitz regarding her position at the High Line as the Deputy Director of Programs & Education. I see in the job description of your future successor that you oversaw her programs (Education, Kids and Teens) as well as Adult, Volunteer and Community Engagement (which she is a part of). Can you describe for me the Adult, Volunteer and Community Engagement Programs or any other programs you may have directed?

Danya:

Adult Programs encompass a couple of different programs are spread across our Art programs, Food programs, Performing Arts programs, and our Tours and talks. The most robust of those categories is the tours. They are walking tours that are an hour to an hour and a half long. Some are led by docents and they are a more general introduction to the High Line tour, while some are led by

specialists, such as gardeners, historical experts, and other specialists who have input into what you can see on or from the High Line. Mostly adults participate in these, though kids do sometimes as well. These are mostly geared towards New Yorkers. The exception being that our general tours tend to attract more out of towners. Though the program serves New Yorkers in that they are an engagement program for our volunteers. Even though the attendees aren't necessarily from New York, there is still an element of supporting the city first in those programs.

We do regular talks about the High Line pretty regularly, such as design talks. We also do a program called Beyond the High Line, where we bring leaders from other parks or cultural projects around the country to come speak about their projects. These take place in the 14th Street Passage. This past year we also did a piece on hurricane Sandy, we also did a program about equity in parks. These programs are also seasonal. They take place between April and October. This may change in the future because we may have a space in the new High Line Headquarters, though we are not sure if we are going to use it for programs yet. The Headquarters are going to be located in the Meat Packing District off of West 12th Street.

Volunteer Programs are run by our volunteer coordinator, Carla and she works with a ton of volunteers on a regular basis. I think we have over 150 who volunteer with us on a recurring basis, and 400 a year who come for a short period of time. They help with information on the park through a greeter program, they help with gardening, and run our programs, remove snow, and do administrative work. That's a really important function that our department serves for the entire organization is being a clearinghouse for that. We don't do much outreach for volunteers, most people just come to us, though we have been doing some volunteer awareness lately. We've done some tabling in the High Line which really nice. This is just a recent thing. During cutback we also do some reaching out because we need so many people to help out. We advertise through our website.

We have been doing Community Engagement work for a while, but it is a relatively new set of standardized programs we are developing. We are still developing what those standardized programs are. The initial idea was that we were finding that residents in the public housing near the High Line weren't coming as much and we wanted to find out why. We got funding to do a year-long survey and listing initiative to understand why that would be and to broadly look at our visitor demographics and see if there were patterns of groups in New York who were not coming to the High Line and why. As a result of looking at what we found we decided as an organization to make a more concerted effort to try to develop relationships with groups of people that are underserved by the High Line. A portion of those groups are the individuals who live in the public housing

near the High Line, but we are also thinking of this more broadly now. We are trying to understand how we can help unite lots of different types of people in the city who don't interact as much and how we can be a resource for those people in different ways. Some of the programs that we consider Engagement Programs are the Teen Programs and we have also been doing things like tabling and supporting basketball tournaments and job fairs and try to bring more off-site awareness building into different communities. When I say tabling I mean bringing a mixture of various High Line Staff and volunteers and some sort of activity and flyers about what Friends of the High Line does and inviting people to visit.

Juliet:

Please describe how a Director interacts with the programs vs. a Manager at the High Line.

Danya:

For the programs I don't organize myself, I oversee them. As the Director I manage all of the different things, but produce some of the adult programs, which means I'm more involved in nailing down the details and being present at the events. I also oversee Emily, Carla, the Volunteer Coordinator, Erica, the Community Engagement Manager and Kristen, our Program's Education Assistant's work. They are more directly involved with developing the details of the programming in their different areas. I am most hands-on with the talks, and specialist led tours and performing arts programs.

Juliet:

Describe in your words some of the values and goals that you hold for your programs. I notice in your job description words like "unique, memorable, creative, and enduring" used to describe your events, activities, and relationships.

Danya:

Friends of the High Line mission includes the words "to cultivate a vibrant community around the park," that is what programming relates to. In some ways I believe that all our work is Community Engagement work, and that is something we are thinking a lot about. We're cultivating a group of people who see the park as theirs and use it in different ways. Who feel a sense of ownership of it and who want to come back over and over again. We want to cultivate ways where people can meet each other, the value of public space helping people interact with people who are different than themselves and who they might not normally get the opportunity to interact with and develop a sense of understanding and pride about that. Also helping ensure that the park stays vibrant for a long time is contingent on having a group of people who live nearby who feel as though the park is theirs and will take care of it in the long term.

In terms of programming content, we always aim to have a high quality experience in mind. We wouldn't book someone we haven't seen or come highly recommended by someone we trust because we want the experience of each program to be memorable and that is fun and cool. There is an element of wanting to do things that are unique, although I think there is a tension sometimes between wanting to do something unique and also do some things that people just want to do. That is something we talk about a lot. We definitely think about the High Line as an unusual space and holds an unusual place in people's minds. We think about how programming can add to that in creative new ways since our space is so unique.

We have multiple goals, and educational goals are a part of that. A lot of the educational programming develops out of wanting to be a resource for people, provide a service, and to help people develop an understanding the High Line better. The more they understand it, the more they will feel a sense of ownership over it. I know that Emily thinks a lot about the educational goals and what they are. She can speak better to that point.

We also think of tours and talks as educational programs, but not as a part of the schools programs.

Juliet:

Describe in your words the process of envisioning; producing and evaluating the events you create.

Danya:

The process of envisioning is that from year to year, we try to keep a running list of ideas that come to mind while we are up on the High Line or from neighbors or program participants or looking at other organization's programming. When it is time to make decisions about the following year, the programming department gets together and has a big brainstorm, talk about it, sit with it, figure out costs and how that plays into it, we ask the fundraising department and see if they could fundraise around the programs. Our Chief Operating Officer has had some input this year. Sometimes our board has ideas to push us in certain directions, so we incorporate that. It all starts out big and we flesh out ideas until we have the final choices.

As far as producing goes, we decide what the details are and getting everything up on the website and marketing the events. We do any pre-work to make sure everything happens. Any work we need to arrange with the partners and staff. We make calls for volunteers. A few hours before events happen we get there and take things out of storage that is scattered along the High Line and set up.

We are starting to work more officially with evaluation this year. We haven't done it formally in the past. We hired a firm to work with us for developing an evaluation system for our events. To date, we have done more anecdotal asking at events and get a sense of what people like, and do more reports of numbers etc. For the education programs, we have surveys that the teachers fill out and send back to us after they complete their experience.

We find that it is going to be important for us to step up our evaluation so that our programs can stay fresh, and that we can have numbers to report for grants. The reason we hadn't done it sooner was because no one in the organization had done programming evaluation in the past and didn't know to do it. We feel like it is important to do it so that we know that we aren't coming up with these ideas in a vacuum. I also think that when it is done right, we can see it as a Community Engagement tool in and of itself.

Juliet:

Are there ideas or reoccurring themes that you intentionally emphasize or highlight in your High Line programming?

Danya:

There are certain themes and topics that the High Line hits on. Urban life, civic life, nature, horticulture, history of the city and the buildings, architecture and design and art and creativity. There are other programs that don't have anything to do with those that are more about other things like bringing together people in unusual ways, like coming together and dancing and more active activities. I think an overarching goal is getting people to come back to the park over and over again and having meaningful experiences so they feel more connected to the space.

Juliet:

What are the parameters that define a program at the High Line as being successful?

Danya:

It is something that we are developing with the firm that are setting up parameters for us. Though, there are couple different indicators. One is how many people came. Another one is the general sense at the event. Does the audience seem engaged? Do they stay for a long time? Are they connecting with the speaker? Or are they connecting with each other? Does it feel like a vibrant, fun event? Different age ranges could be a goal. Also, the percentage of New Yorkers that come to the event. Also is the group diverse?

Juliet:

Are there any model programs you use to inform future programs at the High Line?

Danya:

For the public events I look to The Walker, MOMA, Creative Time does some really neat stuff. The Center for Urban Pedagogy is another cool organization that we look to a lot. Emily has a nice list of kid's programs that inspire her. We've learned a lot from the Central Park Conservancy and the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens about their volunteer programs.

Juliet:

Who are the various target audiences for your public programs and how does having target audiences affect your programming?

Danya:

This is another one we have been talking about a lot. Generally we come up with the idea first and not the audience first. But when we are thinking about whether a program should stay or not we evaluate it under certain guises like whether it will attract people of different cultural backgrounds. We think about locals, New Yorkers and people who are interested in learning different kinds of things. Such as urban planning, there are certain types of people who would be attracted to those lectures. Or people who like to dance. Those are the people who would come to the salsa programs.

Specifically we have started an initiative to cultivate relationships with the residents who live in the nearby public housing. That has been a really specific target audience. We have created really specific public programs around those ideas. That was the initial thought, and we think those programs have the possibility to grow to work with all kinds of different people. Our department thinks a lot about people who are underserved or less advantaged and thinking about programs that may be interesting to them.

Because the High Line is such a tourist destination, we see that programs are a way to really cultivate the New York community.

Juliet:

Are there factors you consider when introducing a new High Line program?

Danya:

Generally it is harder to do this vs. expand existing programs. Budgets are a major factor. Whether we have the bandwidth to adequately communicate with everyone and build an audience for it. Qualitatively there has to be a good reason for doing it. The reason is either it is really, really cool, or everyone expressed a need for it and it is easy so it is a no brainer, or someone told us in a big survey that is what we need to do and we want to build a relationship with that group.

I think we also take public image into account. What does it mean if someone comes to the High Line takes a picture of the program. What's the message of what the program looks like as far as presenting the spaces and organizational identity?

Juliet:

Have there been any changes in the philosophy and practice over the time your programs have been in existence? If so, what motivated the change? If not, what possible changes are considered for the future, and why considered?

Danya:

Philosophy wise, the biggest change has been around introduction of all of the community engagement work. It's not really a change in philosophy, as personally I have always been really interested in community engagement, but I didn't know how to do it. Once we did the survey, we figured out how to do it. That has pushed us in a new direction. We have a new community engagement person on staff and that has pushed us in a new direction with the programming. That's the biggest change. In the future I think it will continue to grow. I feel that everyone understands it is important for many reasons.

Practice wise, I think the new evaluation work will change things a lot. This is the first year where we've had a couple of different years of having a program over and over again. If there's a question of how you decide to keep a program the same from year to year, or if you change things. Or how to keep things fresh? These are important questions for the Programming Department to be asking.

Juliet:

If you were to suddenly move to another city as the Director of Public Programming for another organization similar to the High Line, what aspects of the High Line programming or specific programs would you most want to replicate? Why?

Danya:

The programming has developed specifically to the High Line. Wild Wednesday is a program that I would want to bring to other city programs because there is a

need for environmental education. Step to the High Line is a really great program, because I think Stepping is an underappreciated art. That would be a fun thing to do in other places. Dance parties, good lectures are, of course, great in general.

Having a diverse set of programs is something that I think is really important for parks and places to have. Going to the web site, you see there's something for everyone. I think that's important for parks and programs. It's important that the programs are accessible to a variety of people who like to do a lot of different things. So there needs to be a lot of different points of entry. People have told me that the programming has a lot of convergence in it. You take one idea and mix it with another idea and that is something I would want to bring with me. So it isn't just "doing a show" it is more of a unique experience.

Juliet:

Which programs and specific activities that you help to coordinate do you believe could work in any location in the US?

Danya:

They all could. Maybe tours wouldn't be as exciting in all places because they aren't all linear spaces, but dance parties, and teen curated programs would work in other places.

Juliet:

How do the High Line's programs rely on its unique aspects? That is, programming that highlights the park's physical features, unique location and signature design and could not be replicated anywhere else because there is no other High Line?

Danya:

The types of programs we have are the types of programs that they do in other cities, but the particular way we do them and their location are pretty specific to the High Line space. A lot of it is carefully manicured to fit to the High Line. For example, we can't really have big named bands because we don't have enough space. All of our programs are free and drop in because of the walkway feeling. We wouldn't want people to be walking along the High Line and see something that they aren't invited to come to. A lot of educational decisions relate to the design and the location of the park.

Juliet:

What are the specific features that you incorporate on a regular basis? Why?

Danya:

The story of advocacy is what is underlying. As in how the High Line got saved. We teach all of our docents to include this in their tours and it is included in all of our talks. Physical features are the design and the ability to see other important famous architectural works while on the High Line is taken into account as well.

Juliet:

If you had to choose one program that has occurred over the years on the High Line that you enjoyed or was the most successful in your eyes, which ONE would that be.

Danya:

Arriba! The Latin Dance programs. We've been doing it for a long time. We have a repeat audience now and that is really special. It is something that people would miss if we took it away. It is the one where people have the most fun. The type of music encourages people who don't know each other to dance with each other. Something about the High Line being narrow, it makes the program more intimate.

Juliet:

Besides the various specific physical features that affect the types of programs on the High Line, what are some other influences that contribute to your decision-making? (Types of park users, the financial backing of the park, public laws, and programs, advertising and merchandising campaigns, etc.)

Danya:

User surveys affect it a lot. We were seeing certain demographic patterns, so that's a big one. I was also the person who was doing a lot of the Community Outreach and Engagement. I was thinking a lot about the neighborhood and city context and not just our members and donors and that affected the way the programming developed.

The financial backing hasn't affected or influenced the programming. Other than it helped to make it all happen.

We all try to keep up with social issues. What are the demographic shifts and equity issues in the city and trends that people are thinking about that could make a difference and affect the programming a lot.

Juliet:

How does New York, as a geographic location, affect the High Line programming?

Danya:

It's dense and it helps make the High Line the High Line. The fact that it is so diverse is a big factor, and that it has this interesting dynamic of people coming from all over the world all of the time. And how does that mix with people living here. That is a huge thing with the High Line's programming.

Juliet:

If I were to want to really understand the underlying principles that guide and motivate those who direct the public programs at Friends of the High Line, is there anyone else I should speak to get a more complete picture?

Danya:

The two of us (Emily & Danya) are the people who know the current programming the most. We're the ones who have been thinking about it for the longest amount of time. However, Abby Ehrlich has been hugely important in making the High Line what it is today. She still does consultant work with us.

Abby Ehrlich, Director of Parks Programming at Battery Park City Parks Conservancy and Play Environment & Program Consultant for Friends of the High Line

July 17, 2013. 6:30 pm EDT (Eastern Daylight Time)

Interview Questions for Abby Ehrlich—Program Consultant for Friends of the High Line

Juliet:

Describe in your words, your part in designing the public programs for the Friends of the High Line. How did that come to be?

Abby:

I'll start out with how it came to be. Because the High Line is on the Hudson River, on the West side of Manhattan, 3 miles north of the park I work at, Battery Park City Park. Battery Park City Park is known as a fairly innovative site. We have a lot of things that have happened here that were firsts. We have a somewhat unusual physical structure. A lot of the parkland here is landfill. Some of the infrastructure and landscaping was done in a way that was never done before. There were lots of lessons learned here as a result, from the 1970s on, until a couple years ago when we finished building things out here.

When Josh and Robert started to do research about planning and designing, they called and talked to my Executive Director, Tessa, and were referred to me. They asked about all sorts of things, maintenance and operations, horticulture, and programming. I got a cold call from them and they said: "We are interested in your opinion, do you think it is possible to design a space that is multi-purpose, flexible, outdoor public space that can be used for families, and children and for adult fundraising events, where people would be dressed up, with a band playing... do you think it's even possible?" I said "Yes, that's possible. I can picture it pretty well."

We arranged a meeting and we met and I went out and saw the 10th Ave. Spur. Designs began for programming in that space. The Director of Programs at the time was named Meredith and I worked together, she now works for New York City Parks. She was on her own and I worked with her a little bit, but mostly worked on design stuff. In the meantime some of the designs were starting to come in for the 10th Ave Spur. Some were practical, some were heavy on the fantasy but interesting... Meredith decided to go to City Parks and I became more involved. They were very kind to me and asked me if I might want the job, but at that time I had other obligations. I said to Robert; "Danya was amazing. If you could see your way to promote her into that position, hire someone to be her assistant and hire me to train her as a consultant, I could see her really thriving in that position." I've never been so lucky to have someone like Danya to work with. She just drills ahead. Anywhere you are it is always good to have

others who have the same professional interest. At that time there was such a small staff, so there wasn't a programming person around, so I filled that need.

My part in designing it was that I have been in programming for most of my professional career. I was in Art Museums for 20 years prior to this. I have always been an educator and programmer and believed that it should be for all ages. One of the great joys of life is doing activities that are engaging and connecting with some expertise, also be able to do it hands-on and do it with your own peer group, but also if you are part of an international family; with grandma, children, step-children, you don't always want to be separated by age. Programming for all ages is very organic. We started talking about that as well as school groups, which is very important part of any community anywhere. Because it's our responsibility to provide the children with as much as possible. The great educators who work with them are eager to follow current events and work that into their curriculum. So we talked a lot about working with the school groups. We created internship so we could reach the teens and college students. And we reached the casual visitors by using docents and greeters. We put together a curriculum and training for docents and greeters. Like, what really matters for the High Line? We incorporated what was there presently to teach about the High Line. Just like if you are standing in front of a Van Gogh, don't start talking about Picasso. It's important to use what is there in the present as the touchstone, as the core and the start and the finish of what you are talking about. In this case it was the High Line's history, the High Line's design, about saving the High Line, how the community gets involved, about the nature, and about all of the things that could happen on the High Line, like yoga, playing, listening to music, the public art, etc. etc. It could go on and on.

One of the great beauties of working in programming is it is a very natural way to celebrate our differences and similarities. You don't know how much fun it is to draw boats on the river until you try it. We literally have a city bus driver who pulls his bus over and takes art classes with us on his lunch breaks. There's just no way you would know that you have that common interest or enjoyment of something until it happens. You have to keep putting it out there. Some people like coming to the salsa dancing because they like watching, others used to do it as teenagers and they can't imagine the good fortune that they can now come and do it for free; some remember it as part of their professional travel, it may be part of their ancestry, etc. We do a lot of fishing down here, many people don't really remember that they live on an island! So we are a catalyst for things that are so much more important, such as enjoying life and enjoying life and enhancing city life, and getting along together. Now I look at all bus drivers differently. I love trying new things and having the expectation that if you put out great quality, and you think of yourself as a good host, it is going to work out. If it doesn't, that is ok. I believe in pilot programs. If you think of everything as a pilot program you

can always say “You know what? We tried kite flying and there were too many trees in the way!” It’s ok, it wasn’t a bad thing, you just aren’t going to do it again. Some things take off and you might never have guessed that they would take off. We had a suggestion for a singing circles, that came from a suggestion and I thought to myself, “Well, that’s stupid” 14 years later, it is still going strong. You have to, of course, give 100% effort to make it the best it can be, and not extend yourself budget wise.

Outreach was always a really important part of the definition of the department because of the demographics of the High Line area. The demographics of Chelsea are about as dramatic as any of the 5 boroughs because there is extreme poverty and extreme privilege. Thinking always in terms of not just audience development in the typical fashion, as in you want people there and you want people to know about it and all of that, but how do you let the people who are playing in chain link fence playground housing development two blocks away know that they can take the kids up for a very nice walk up on the High Line? Danya made great inroads there working with public housing authority and people who take the time to sit down and talk together. It can be a little daunting as you are coming from this new flashy space and they might mistake you for a flashy Chelsea art gallery. You have to really prepare and do good research and come in with a very nice, modest invitation of what could be. See if they want to come down for a private tour, or could we come down and talk at one of your community meetings, etc. Raising that consciousness of everyone on the staff that some people are easier to reach than others. That has to be not a huge issue, but at least a consideration when thinking about things. You have to consider all of the slices of the pie.

Juliet:

I believe you have done contract work for Friends of the High Line since the beginning, please generally describe the programs that you created for the Friends of the High Line, and when they occurred.

Abby:

The Children’s Workyard Kit. During the first season on the High Line, I did a couple Family Programs myself on Saturday mornings and we did a few things. We did a little hunt and built mini high lines that they planted seeds in and did rail road tracks. We tried to help the kids understand the difference between the environmental conditions in the different areas in Section 1. So my colleague, who is another freelance consultant, made pinwheels with them using recycled materials, which harked back to what the High Line is, a re-purposed space. It was only two hours and you can’t do that sort of activity all of the time, because it needs to be led by someone. After a few seasons, I was talking to Danya and she

said it was time to bring up the idea of a designated place for play. The 10th Avenue spur was given to maintenance, and that was definitely needed, you always have to tip your hat to maintenance and operation. I wrote Robert this really impassioned letter that I could imagine a playground that you could pack up at night. The components of the playground would be both industrial and elegant because those were the values that the High Line was most about. They could transcend the huge age differences, and I could imagine such a thing being designed. He responded favorably. There were lots of ideas that went into it. Working on the Rail Road. Everybody likes to build. It seems like at a certain age we're not supposed to do that anymore, but I don't believe in that. So it was designed so that the parents or caregivers there help out. Some of the parts are big and a little cumbersome, so the parents, or caregivers need to assist and that is part of the design. They do need to collaborate, and they need to work in partnership with others, and that is how you get people talking and having fun together. It was important there were loose parts. Not all kids are builders so it gave those kids other things to do; the kids are "pretenders" who aren't going to benefit from building things. So there were pails, and rocks, which could be imagined as anything, they could be "eggs" that they are gathering, or "fish" or "money" or whatever. It was important to have every bit of it out of real material, metal, fiber, burlap sacks, wood, iron, leather, real tools, etc. A lot of it is available in plastic, but we didn't want that. I searched all over and found these things. There is a company in Texas that makes goggles for small people, so we purchased them there. I had met Cas Holman through Rockwell Group years ago when I was working with them on the Imagination Playground. I was a play consultant to them, and Cas was working on one aspect of that. I thought that she was an industrial designer, and she teaches industrial design. Being a teacher was a good sign for me, because it meant she was open-minded. It came together and we packaged it like a giant art crate because it was in keeping with Chelsea's art galleries. There is the dream that it will be in lots of parks and schools, and I even hope it could be out more often at the High Line as well.

Juliet:

Please describe how the arts or creativity came into play in your programming.

Abby:

The arts and creativity to my thinking, were completely a given. Because it is the High Line and New York City and Chelsea. I have a background in visual arts and Danya's background includes dance and we both just think the arts are one of the things that should be in parks. There is a great track record across the city parks, this is a place where the arts are welcome to flourish and you can have a lot broader exposure to all audiences, because you don't have to charge a ticket. Then how to have people have brief hands-on experiences is something I have a lot of experience with. I told Danya that some possibilities could be adult

drawing classes, children's arts classes and crafts and I gave her a list of places that I thought did a really good job in the city. I encouraged her to go see these locations. I told her about our family dances and thought they would do very well. It seemed that was a great opportunity to connect with the Spanish speaking community. We met very regularly and she said she didn't know what to call the dances, and I thought of Arriba!, which is perfect because it means "up there" in Spanish. It is spirited and if you have a park in the sky, you have to have a dance in the sky. The other arts I have nothing to do with but I'm a huge admirer of it. It is excellent to have a changing roster up there. As far as creativity with my own work with Danya and with Emily, I strongly encourage the school programs to have a drawing portion, and they do. We need to always draw because it is another way of learning and taking notes. It also breaks down barriers and can express some things they might not be able to articulate. Storytelling I consider an art, especially if you encourage the kids to participate. Some of the storytellers I recommended to Danya. Ralph Lee did puppeteering for Halloween and he is a treasure in NYC and it was amazing good fortune. And he works large scale, which is what you need to make an impression on the High Line. There are a lot of ideas that didn't make it. I wanted to do this thing with shoes, and a drag fashion show.

Juliet:

Did you have any specific philosophies that informed the programming that you designed?

Abby:

Yes. I have hit on a lot of them, but I will try to make it more streamlined. Number one is that the staff is trained, the performers be hired, and the supplies or equipment that are needed are done so that the primary goal is that everyone feel welcome, truly welcome. That takes more staff training than you think. I audition all of the performers. I have to see how they do it. You can audition the greatest performers in the world, but if they are jerks and want to be in a club, sorry it doesn't work. As far as supplies and equipment, it may sound silly, but it means having enough children's scissors and adult scissors if you are doing art, etc. You need to be really prepared, with the primary goal that everyone feels welcome, really welcome. By doing that, by getting good at that, by having a staff that gets good at that, you then have a sense of confidence that you can try more and different things, and you are not going to be scrambling and radioing to someone to bring me something fast, because I have a big problem on my hands. Along with that, in the theme that everyone feel welcome is that we think about what it is that is the message of your program? If the message is that you already need to be good at something, I believe you have undone the first philosophy that everyone is welcome. You can't expect expertise. Unless it is registration class and you make it known. If it is storytelling, you have to have shade. You have to

have the right kind of stories for the right kind of audience. Which is probably going to be younger than what you wanted, because everyone in NY thinks his or her 6 month old is a genius. You have to think it through really hard. Even if you don't have experience, you need to do a lot of research. You need to see what other places are doing and become discriminating to good quality, and that takes some time. It is important to be mindful that different ages come together in NY, kids don't come to a park like the High Line on their own. You have to present content that is appealing to all ages to the people who come. You don't want parents on the phone during story telling. So you ask them politely, but you also don't want them wishing they were on the phone either.

It is important to have the support of the whole organization. It is an important part of my philosophy. You have to have the support of maintenance and operations, because they matter deeply. They will always be the backbone of what you do. If they have to close off an area and don't tell you if there's a leak, etc. then you are not hitting the mark. They haven't been brought into the value of your programming. The same is true of your board members and Director. They have to understand the value. They have to understand the value, and these are very busy people. I always encouraged Danya to send pictures of programs to the people I report to, or influential to the success of my programs. I want them to know why we have children's gardening, when it is pickle day, etc. Spreading your belief system and your successes and the beautiful things that happened are really important.

Creativity should be infused in everything. That means if you have art specialists, they need to give you their supply lists way in advance, so you can budget it. And also know that they are flexible. If the kids don't want to make stain glass windows as the project they designed, then they don't need to. Creativity needs to be well thought out, well planned and open-ended.

Cities are full of people who are disenfranchised. There is no rhyme or reason to why. No programming is ever going to change or fix the world. When you are doing programming you have a fresh start. I can walk up to a family with kids who are very clearly not from this neighborhood, and unfortunately it is all too clear, and I'll say to them "Hi, I blah blah blah... do you know about our park house? We have a park house that is 5 minutes from here. You can borrow or use games, basketballs, etc. And there is a water fountain there too." I try to say it like a friend. And they will ask me, "Well, how much is it"? And I'll say, "Oh no, it is free, it is part of what we do here at the park." Your outreach has to start one-on-one as well as the bigger types of outreach. You need to be open and just talk to people. You can literally make the city a better place through programming. If that spirit carries through all of your staff and programming,

then it is an exciting field to be in. I am very against the privatization of parks. People need open spaces.

Also, you shouldn't need any written instructions on how to have fun.

Juliet:

Were there any model programs that you used as a model to inform programs at the High Line?

Abby:

There are a lot of really great places. In the New York Botanical Gardens there is the Everett Children's Garden. It is pretty much science and nature based, but I worked with them many years ago and they had neat environment, where the kids could build a 12-15 foot nest and they would feel like they were the size of a bird. Using large materials and large items to build. When I was at the Brooklyn museum, we did a project that went really wrong, but it was really fun. The kids changed the project on me completely; we ended up building this really large hotel thing. Anything that is collaborative like that, and there is a performance or a way that the audience can get involved is great. I really like that sort of project and they inform my work. I was at the museum of Jewish heritage, our neighbor down here and they have a storytelling group. I am a big fan of storytelling because electronics have taken people away from storytelling, and parents don't have any confidence that they can actually tell stories. Kids are natural storytellers if you let them and if there's a way you can encourage that. At the museum, they had storytellers that used props and instruments. The kids helped act out the story. That is different than pure storytelling, which they told me in grad school that that is the way it needed to be, and they were, of course, smarter than me. But I saw a group using props in the last few years and decided that I did like it when the kids got to use props, and put on monkey tails and be monkeys, etc. I was just in Copenhagen, we were in Hamlet's Castle, and they had this great playground there. There were these big rocks that you hopped from rock to rock and if you looked closely, the rocks were actually a dragon. The whole thing was very subtle, and I think that subtle is good.

The Water Feature on High Line is a good example of how you shouldn't need any written instructions to know how to have fun. That is what we try to do at Battery Park. It is a hard one, because a lot of the people we hire as specialists are schoolteachers, and they want to write down instructions and post them on trees and stuff, and I prefer to have activities that are personal and intuitive. I want projects where just seeing it, and seeing the components of the project will speak to them, because many of our participants are pre-verbal learners or don't speak English, or their nanny is tired, or their caregiver is cranky, so it's best not to depend on instructions.

I see models everywhere because I think in terms of my audience.

Danya did a great program that introduced Step Dancing to a lot of people. They did great. There were tourists from all over the world who had never seen anything like this. I went two of the times. Excellent, excellent cultural exchange, cultural exchange within our own city. Communities that wouldn't come to the High Line otherwise. These are the things that are so much the heart and soul of the philosophy that inform the programming.

Juliet:

Can you recommend any books or literature that would help me understand your philosophies better?

Abby:

There are a few. The Last Child in the Woods. Places for Childhood. Making Quality Happen in the Real World—by Jim Greenman. Caring Spaces, Learning Places also by Jim Greenman, The Case for Make-believe, by Susan Linn. A Child's Work. The Importance of Fantasy Play by Vivian Pale. Reclaiming Childhood, by Bill Crain. And Robin Moore wrote a book about natural learning environments, but I can't remember the actual name.

Juliet:

Is there anything else you would like to share?

Abby:

I would say the last bit of heart to heart info I would say that I believe that you have to keep observing the programs that you do. Take notes, talk to people and fix what needs fixing and improve upon it. If it is all right then highlight it, then and share with people why it is meaningful or successful. Why it was successful or meaningful. It's easy to miss stuff. When explaining to others your future ideas for programming you need to remember that people don't always get it, or understand what you are aiming for and often they can't see the vision that you have in mind. It is your job to observe and translate that for them. I personally use photographs. I take pictures and then go through a process of translations and explain what we are seeing. Therefore you need to research and shop carefully for the most versatile and correct equipment or materials etc. If you just say we need to research and shop carefully to someone, they nod their heads and say, "Of course I want to do that," but they don't know what it means then you are not really communicating your needs. Most people don't have the depth of interest in this particular field. It is not considered an area of expertise, but you can make inroads with important people. That is the effort that is worth it.

APPENDIX C: THEMES & SUB-THEMES DERIVED FROM INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

“What are the underlying principles that guided and motivated those who directed and designed the public programs at the Friends of the High Line?”

Theme 1: Commitment to Create a Welcoming Environment

- Opportunities for Everyone
- Free Programming
- Invitation to New Yorkers & Locals

Theme 2: Acknowledging the Significance of Audience Development

- Repeat Visitors
- Community Engagement
- Cultivating Relationships & Community Ownership

Theme 3: Dedication to High Standards in Programming

- Fulfilling Needs
 - Community-Based Arts Programs
 - Nature & Gardening Programs
- “Well thought out, well planned, and open-ended”
- Unique & Fun
- Evaluation

Theme 4: Recognizing a Unique Space

- Unique History
 - Rail
 - Advocacy
- Unique Linear Space

Theme 5: Acknowledging Future Growth Opportunities & Improvements

- Community Engagement
- Family Arts Programming
- Assessment/ Evaluation

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