



**TRUST** FOR  
**PUBLIC**  
**LAND**™

# Pathway to Parks

**SERVICES GUIDE**  
Jan 2024 Version



# Pathway to Parks

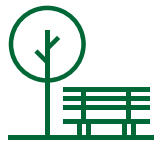
## Park Equity for Our Most Pressing Challenges

Quality parks and green spaces are fundamental for sustaining equitable, resilient communities. Yet, 1 in 3 U.S. residents – 100 million people, including 28 million kids – don't have a park within a 10-minute walk of home. Access to nature and the outdoors is a matter of health, equity, and justice. That's why Trust for Public Land, a national nonprofit, works alongside communities across the country to prioritize and accelerate park equity and to ensure that everyone, regardless of zip code, can live in healthy, resilient, thriving communities.

## Trust for Public Land's Parks Initiative & 10-Minute Walk® program

Trust for Public Land's 10-Minute Walk® program calls upon mayors and municipal leaders to demonstrate their commitments to parks and inspire adoption of long-term, system-wide strategies to improve equitable access to quality parks. Since the launch of 10-Minute Walk in 2017, more than 300 mayors have made the 10-Minute Walk commitment to reimagine their cities and achieve equitable access to parks for all.

Trust for Public Land works to support cities and communities moving from the 10-Minute Walk commitment to action. Harnessing over 50 years of experience across the country—and working at every scale from locally to nationally—we work through our toolkit of activities:



### Public Land for Public Good

We work with communities and partners to acquire, provide access, and put into public ownership the lands and waterways that enhance quality of life across our nation.



### Park Creation and Transformation

We partner with communities to create and transform parks that reflect local interests, cultures, heritage, and aspirations, and connect people to the outdoors and to each other.



### Data and Insight

We help cities and regions prioritize investments in parks and public lands, using data-driven mapping technology and insights to pinpoint the greatest opportunities to bring greenspaces to communities.



### Advocacy

We work with elected officials, thought leaders, and communities to build capacity and support for policies that support the parks and public lands that make our communities great places to live, work, and play.



### Funding and Leverage

We work with cities, states, counties, and communities to pass ballot measures and unlock public funding for parks and open space. To date, we've generated \$84 billion for park creation and land protection.

This overview document introduces many of the services and resources available to cities that have joined 10-Minute Walk.

**Learn more at [tpl.org](https://tpl.org) and [10minutewalk.org](https://10minutewalk.org), and reach us at [10minutewalk@tpl.org](mailto:10minutewalk@tpl.org).**

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# Assessment

What are the current conditions of my parks and park system?

Where are the priority areas for improvement?

| Service/Product                         | What do you need or want to know?                                                                                                                                | Service Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Overall ParkScore Assessment</b>     | How does my park system perform in terms of acreage, access, investment, amenities, and equity?                                                                  | Collect, confirm, and update park system information, based on the ParkScore® index metrics for acreage, access, investment, amenities, and equity. The deliverable is an assessment of a given city's park system based on the five metrics shared above.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Level of Service Analysis</b>        | How well are the park and recreation needs of my community being met with existing resources?                                                                    | Conduct analysis to understand how the current park system meets community needs. This typically combines four separate analyses: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Customized ParkScore analysis (geospatial and non-spatial metrics)</li> <li>2. On-site interviews/facilitated meetings with park visitors</li> <li>3. Observational usage and park/amenity condition information</li> <li>4. Visitation statistics collected through anonymized mobility data</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Benchmarking Study</b>               | How does my park system compare to peer communities?                                                                                                             | Compare park system to peer jurisdictions. Benchmarks can include annual park budget, annual city budget, acreage per resident, and number of amenities. Specific comparison parameters and peer cities can be selected with local partners. Initial deliverable is typically a table showing how a given city's park system compares to those of peer cities, based on the ParkScore index metrics.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Park and Park System Assessments</b> | What are the current conditions, quality and performance, use, amenity availability and distribution, and public perceptions of the city's parks or park system? | Assess park conditions through direct on-site observations, collection of other data sets, and/or through community engagement. Typical methods, used separately or in combination to provide a snapshot of current conditions, are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Park condition/quality assessments</li> <li>2. Observational assessment of park use</li> <li>3. On-site interviews with park visitors to gather qualitative data about user experience</li> <li>4. Mobile surveys to collect park quality data, including park amenities and amenity quality data for any park/city in the ParkServe database. The service involves technical application support, and requires on-the-ground efforts to engage the surrounding community.</li> </ol> |

Where are potential sites for park improvements or new park development?

Which are the priority projects?

| Service/Product                                                                       | What do you need or want to know?                                                                                                                                   | Service Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Opportunity Analysis</b>                                                           | How could actions (like joint use agreements) impact park access?                                                                                                   | Identify and characterize opportunities to increase 10-minute walk access through public lands owned and/or managed by city agencies and entities. The deliverable is typically a spreadsheet or web-based data viewer that allows for prioritization of parcels based on user-determined priorities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Identifying Sites for Increasing Access</b>                                        | Where are the potential park sites that would serve the greatest number of residents?                                                                               | Conduct geospatial “What Would It Take” analysis that identifies effective, theoretical park locations in order to aid jurisdictions in reaching the goal of having 100% of residents within a 10-minute walk of a park. Analysis is based upon the ParkServe® methodology.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Web-Based Decision-Support Tools</b>                                               | Where are priority park locations for equitable park access and addressing other concerns (e.g., flooding)?                                                         | Create customized web-based applications that help to identify priority locations for parks, and provide related query and reporting capabilities. Building off of the ParkServe® “What Would It Take” Analysis, layers can be added for specific topics or concerns (e.g., urban heat island, flooding protection). Community/stakeholder-driven prioritization can also be integrated.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Field Verification for Parks, Trails or Open Space</b>                             | Can we verify feasibility of potential trail routes or park locations?                                                                                              | Lead community volunteers in collecting data on proposed trails, parks, or open space. This field verification (or “groundtruthing”) enables calibration of remote-sensing data (for example determining accurate access points) and provides key qualitative information on things like the park visitor experience.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Community/Stakeholder-Driven Prioritization of Park and Open Space Investments</b> | How can we implement a planning process that fosters deep engagement and builds community consensus?<br><br>Where does the community prioritize new park locations? | Facilitate work with community members to understand local priorities for parks. Strategies for this facilitated community and/or stakeholder-driven engagement processes often include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach through surveys, interviews, and interactive tabling at local events.</li> <li>• Workshops designed and led to help participants contribute to developing shared priorities, vision, and strategies.</li> <li>• Data analysis and visualization to understand shared priorities in the context of factors like demographics, socioeconomic, traffic patterns, foot traffic, public transit, and the geography of health and climate change.</li> </ul> Resulting deliverables include reports, pdf maps, customized web-based decision support tools, and maps that highlight priority park and open space investments. |
| <b>“Greenprints,” Master Plans</b>                                                    | How can this data be used to inform decisions?                                                                                                                      | Leverage data- and community-driven insights as well as research of other city models to produce actionable recommendations and reports.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

# Funding and Policy

What mechanisms and funding programs support parks and parks systems?

What measures and policies support parks and parks systems?

| Service/Product                                                             | What do you need or want to know?                                                                 | Service Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Outreach and Education</b>                                               | How can we increase awareness and support of a program or project by leaders and decision-makers? | Coordinate and facilitate meetings between TPL staff, city stakeholders and national leaders/decision-makers (such as Congressional staff or Federal Agency staff) to bring awareness to priority topics, projects, or programs. Use data to support learning, reporting, and storytelling, as well as to guide future investment and make-the-case for parks.                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Funding Consultation</b>                                                 | What funding programs are available and feasible for parks-related work?                          | Coordinate and facilitate meetings between TPL staff and city and/or state staff regarding various funding sources, particularly via federal funding programs and agency relationships. Can also include developing a methodical approach for building relationships and targeting non-traditional partners to fund park implementation.                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Funding Feasibility Study</b>                                            | What funding programs are available and feasible for the funding of parks-related work?           | Conduct research into finance mechanisms and funding sources, resulting in a report describing potential funding sources and feasibility of use.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Policy Consultation &amp; the 10-Minute Walk Park Equity Accelerator</b> | What policies support parks and parks-related work?                                               | Provide advisory services and recommendations into how cities can leverage existing codes and processes, and how policies and processes could be modified or optimized to achieve 10-minute walk goals. Anchored in a research-to-practice approach, the 10-Minute Walk program identifies the barriers to park equity; generates policy recommendations; and provides resources, guidance, and technical assistance to advance practice on the ground. Learn more at <a href="https://10minutewalk.org">10minutewalk.org</a> . |
| <b>Grants Writing or Support</b>                                            | How can we secure funding from existing programs?                                                 | Coordinate, research, write, or provide support for responses to requests for proposals.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Economic Benefits Forecasting</b>                                        | What are the potential economic benefits of improving parks and my park system?                   | Forecast the benefits of potential park and open space investments, with a specific equity lens.<br><i>Please see the Learning and Resource table on <a href="#">page 9</a> for more information.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Ballot Measures</b>                                                      | How can we provide more funding for parks?                                                        | Conduct feasibility research, polling, measure design, and campaign planning/strategy support for ballot measures or other mechanisms that increase funding for parks.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

# Project Implementation

How can we deploy plans and implement multi-benefit parks projects?

How do we ensure long-term success and maximization of benefits?

| Service/Product                             | What do you need or want to know?                                                                                               | Service Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Park Design and Development Strategy</b> | What are the types and characteristics of projects we should pursue to provide better access to parks and open space amenities? | Provide advisory services around parks projects. Trust for Public Land provides expertise in traditional park space acquisition and development strategy, as well as alternative practices and tactics, such as the redevelopment of community schoolyards and implementation of shared use agreements. |
| <b>Park Design</b>                          | How do we develop designs for new or renovated parks?                                                                           | Scope, partner, and implement community engagement processes to design and build parks using a participatory process. Trust for Public Land's process builds social capacity, provides opportunities for civic engagement, and results in a park that meets the unique needs of that community.         |
| <b>Park Development</b>                     | How do we create new or renovated park spaces?                                                                                  | Leverage TPL's experience implementing a wide range of parks, trails, and schoolyard projects. These services can range from project coordination to construction management.                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Programming Programs and Plans</b>       | What programs activate parks and open spaces? How do we implement these?                                                        | Develop or support of recreational, health-related, cultural, or educational programs. Often includes partnering with local community-based organizations or nonprofits, or schools, or establishing "Friends of" groups.                                                                               |
| <b>Stewardship Plans</b>                    | How we do ensure long-term stewardship of park spaces?                                                                          | Support municipalities in developing community stewardship plans for existing and new parks. Reports detail community stewardship, engagement models, and recommendations.                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Land Acquisition and Protection</b>      | How can we acquire, protect, and make privately-owned land accessible for the public?                                           | Lead real estate transactions to acquire, protect, and convey to the public land that is privately-held.                                                                                                                                                                                                |

# Progress and Benefits

How do know we're "moving the needle" to achieve our 10-minute walk goals?

What is the overall impact of the work we've implemented?

| Service/Product                    | What do you need or want to know?                                                                                           | Service Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Project Impact Assessment</b>   | What are the impacts of parks and parks-related activities? Impacts focus on environmental, health, and community benefits. | <p>Provide a snapshot of benefits of a park or park system, or a measurement of project impact (with pre-and post-project assessments). Methods of collecting data include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calculations (e.g., water capture through permeable surfaces created, air pollution avoided through trees planted)</li> <li>• Observational assessment of park condition and/or quality and performance assessments (e.g., inventory amenities, evaluate park quality/function, and document access points)</li> <li>• Observational assessment of park usage and physical activity (e.g., estimated age and ethnicity, physical activity levels and type, quality of amenities)</li> <li>• Anonymized mobility data for visitation patterns</li> <li>• Surveys or interviews, online, remotely or in-person (i.e., park user or resident perceptions)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Return on Investment Report</b> | What is the return on my investment in conservation programs?                                                               | Compare the investment in land conservation programs to the economic value of the natural goods and services (such as improved drinking water quality, reduced air pollution, and wildlife habitat) provided by those protected lands. The report also provides an overview of the importance of the industries supported by conservation (such as forestry, farming, outdoor recreation, and tourism).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Economic Benefits Analysis</b>  | What are the economic benefits of a specific park or trail system?                                                          | Use original research to quantify the dollar value of the benefits that have been generated by a park or trail system (such as recreational value, health care cost savings, tourism, and enhanced property value). Deliverables typically include a report fact sheet, and PowerPoint presentation with talking points.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

# Learning and Resources

Where can we build knowledge, skills, and training to implement processes and projects?

Where can we find best practices, case studies, or online tools?

Trust for Public Land offers numerous tools and online resources to support cities to assess, plan for, prioritize and make the case for parks. Key tools are described below, and the full suite is available online ([web.tplgis.org/10minwalk-project-gallery/](http://web.tplgis.org/10minwalk-project-gallery/)). Use of the resources and tools below can be significantly enhanced with services described in the tables above. TPL is also consistently working to enhance and update these tools (i.e., evolving methodology for the ParkScore® index; expanding ParkServe® data layers; building data tools and analysis for park amenities, park quality, and park visitation).

## Resource and Description

### Trainings and Workshops

TPL staff provide trainings in how to use tools or conduct various activities, including online tools, such as Decision-Support Tools; processes, such as Direct Observation Assessments/ System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities; and topic-area focused: Creative Placemaking, Climate, and Health.



## With this resource, you can...

- > **Learn** and increase knowledge among practitioners and leaders (especially around practice, policy, and planning).
- > **Gain** skills and understand of how to apply best practices, case examples, or effective strategies throughout work.

### Community of Practice

The 10-Minute Walk Park Equity Community of Practice is a capacity building and peer learning network for city leaders and staff. In addition to expert trainings, we co-create policy recommendations, resources, and guidance that supports changing park equity practices. Each year, there are several learning tracks available (current topics include parks and affordable housing, maintenance, and civic engagement).

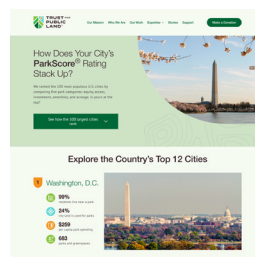


- > **Cultivate** peer-to-peer learning and exchange with cities working on improving park equity, access, and quality.
- > **Learn** and share best practices and strategies in tackling park access and equity, and outline steps to accelerate action.

### ParkScore®

<http://tpl.org/parkscore>

Our ParkScore® index is the national gold-standard comparison of park systems across the 100 most populous cities in the United States. Every year, Trust for Public Land publishes the most complete and in-depth look at U.S. city parks systems – explore the complete rankings and resources. The index measures park systems according to five categories reflective of an excellent city park system: access, investment, amenities, acreage, and equity.



- > **Find** city scores and rankings.
- > **Explore** interactive maps to:
  - Identify how many people are able to reach a park within a 10-minute walk and their demographics.
  - See the distribution of parks and park acres according to race and income.

# Learning and Resources

Are there places to build knowledge, skills, and training to implement processes and projects?

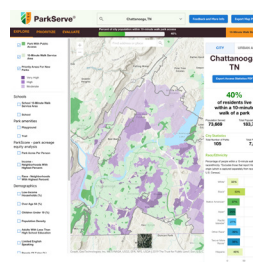
Where can we find best practices, case studies, or online tools?

## Resource and Description

### ParkServe®

<https://tpl.org/parkserve>

The ParkServe database maintains an inventory of parks for every urban area in the U.S., including Puerto Rico. Today, there are about 145,000 parks in the ParkServe database. Using the online platform, you can explore and visualize contextual information about communities and their parks, including 10-minute walk access stats and priorities for park access gaps.



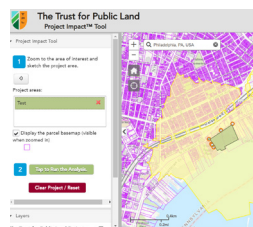
## With this resource, you can...

- > **Access information** about park systems and reach, including 10-minute walk demographics (race/ethnicity, age, and income) and maps for parks, communities, urban areas, or potential park sites.
- > **Determine** where to site future parks, with an emphasis on focusing resources in underserved neighborhoods.

### Project Impact Analysis Toolbox

<https://web.tplgis.org/tplimpact>

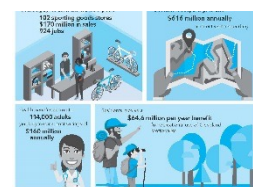
This suite of online tools allows the user to sketch potential park sites, assess the potentially impacted residents within a 10-minute walk service area, and identify the top 20 locations for new parks in the 100 largest U.S. cities.



- > **Locate, sketch and analyze** projects.
- > Quickly **evaluate and assess** who will be served by a new park in any given city.
- > Quickly **identify** the top 20 areas or locations for new parks, in terms of service area and statistics.

### Forecasting Tools (custom analysis)

This analysis estimates dollar amounts for the benefits generated through future park investments. Categories calculated include enhanced property values, reduced air pollution, stormwater management, recreation, health, tourism, and economic development.



**Estimate** benefits generated through park system investments, including:

- > dollar amounts for the benefits generated by maximizing equity in park system investments.
- > environmental benefits generated by investing in different typologies of green infrastructure.

### Publications and Research Briefs

<https://www.tpl.org/resource-hub>

TPL engages in extensive data collection and analysis. The resulting analyses, data briefs, research, tools, and reports shape conservation policy and help communities make the case for parks and open space.



- > **Learn** from up-to-date parks research and data.
- > **Access** hundreds of reports, roadmaps, and research briefs, including publications on community stewardship and engagement models (including one about conservancies), on Parks as Climate Solutions, the Field Guide for Creative Placemaking and Parks, and methodologies for determining the greenhouse gas benefits due to active transportation projects.