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GREENSPACE POLICY ACTION GUIDE

Why Greenspace Matters

Greenspaces are essential for community well-being and fostering health, social connection, and climate resilience. Yet, access to these benefits is far from equitable. More than 100 million people in the U.S.—including 28 million children—lack a park within a 10-minute walk of home.[1] This disparity is even more pronounced in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color, where parks are often smaller, serve more people, and lack important features like shade trees.[2-3] These same communities also face higher rates of chronic health conditions such as asthma, obesity, diabetes, and heart disease,[4-5] in part due to limited access to quality parks and greenspaces.[6]

Research shows that spending time in nature improves overall well-being, including both mental and physical health.[7] Greenspaces play a role in promoting physical activity, facilitating social interaction, reducing risk factors for certain chronic diseases,[8] as well as helping communities adapt to the effects of a changing climate.[9] Without access to these benefits, communities already burdened by health disparities are further disadvantaged.

Decades of policy decisions have shaped this inequity, prioritizing well-resourced, predominantly white neighborhoods while leaving others with inadequate greenspaces.[10] As a result, millions of people miss out on the physical, social, and environmental benefits that parks provide.

Closing this gap requires bold action. By advancing local policies and goals that promote access to greenspaces, city leaders can create stronger, healthier, and more resilient cities—where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Taking Action

Policies play an important role in shaping the availability of greenspaces. Recognizing the power of policy to bring high-quality greenspaces to everyone, CityHealth and Trust for Public Land (TPL) developed evidence-informed criteria for CityHealth's Greenspace policy solution based on what we know improves people's health, protects the environment, and promotes health equity. These criteria ensure that cities prioritize the well-being of all residents, especially those in historically underserved neighborhoods.

CityHealth's Greenspace policy solution focuses on three key areas: access, investment, and equity. The framework uses a tiered approach, with cities progressing from bronze to silver to gold by meeting increasingly ambitious criteria. Bronze and silver policies establish the foundation by ensuring cities commit to greenspace access and investment. Gold policies take access and investment further—directing resources to underserved neighborhoods

ACCESS: The ability of all residents to safely and conveniently reach parks and greenspaces—typically measured by proximity, such as the 10-Minute Walk® standard.

INVESTMENT: The allocation of public resources to create, improve, and maintain parks, trails, tree canopy, and other greenspaces.

EQUITY: The fair distribution of parks, tree canopy, and greenspace resources, ensuring historically underinvested communities receive targeted investments to correct past disparities.

and marginalized communities that are also disproportionately impacted by poorer health outcomes.

Since Greenspace was added to CityHealth's second policy package in 2021, 55 of the 75 largest cities have earned a Greenspace medal, with 29 having achieved gold. This progress highlights how local leaders are prioritizing parks as essential infrastructure for healthier, more equitable cities. By adopting these policy solutions, cities not only address environmental and health challenges but also inspire others to create stronger, more livable cities.

Who This Guide Is For

This policy action guide is a resource for:

- **City leaders** – Mayors, council members, other elected officials, and agency leaders seeking to establish visionary policies
- **City staff** – Urban planners, public health professionals, parks and recreation managers, and environmental staff working in health equity, parks, and environmental resilience

THIS POLICY ACTION GUIDE WAS DEVELOPED TO HELP CITIES of all sizes develop strong Greenspace policies. You can use this guide to:

- **Understand CityHealth's medal criteria.** Learn how the bronze, silver, and gold medal levels are defined and what your city needs to achieve at each.

- **Earn a medal.** Use our step-by-step guidance to develop a Greenspace policy that aligns with the medal criteria and addresses your city's specific needs.

- **Advance your goals.** Put your policy into action with strategies to improve park access, enhance tree canopy, and ensure long-term greenspace equity.

- **Community advocates** – Residents, nonprofit organizations, and activists driving grassroots efforts to ensure greenspace and health equity in their neighborhoods

Towpath in Ohio.

PHOTO CREDIT: MCKINLEY WILEY, COURTESY OF TPL

Greenspaces, including parks, trails, and robust tree canopies, are essential for individual and community health, promoting physical activity, reducing chronic disease risks, fostering social interaction, lowering crime, and boosting economic vitality. Proximity to greenspace is linked to better physical health and mental well-being for people of all ages. In numerous studies, exposure to nature has been associated with protective effects on depression and anxiety. Living close to high-quality parks is also associated with a sense of community, social cohesion, and social capital. The U.S. surgeon general's recent advisory on loneliness pointed to parks as a key piece of "social infrastructure" that promotes interaction and connection.[11] Parks and public greenspaces also help cities mitigate and adapt to climate change effects, such as extreme heat and poor air quality. Additionally, many of the factors that make parks and greenspaces beneficial—from building social capital, to providing exposure to greenery, to cooling urban neighborhoods—are interconnected in the way they improve public health.

Despite these benefits, many communities are left without access to a high-quality park or greenspace, with communities of color and low-income neighborhoods often having smaller, lower-quality parks.[12] As a result, millions of residents already facing health, economic, and environmental burdens are denied the full benefits that well-maintained parks and trees provide.

Physical access to public greenspaces is just the starting point. Creating or improving them may not be sufficient to promote use. Whether people visit parks and how they use them is related to individual characteristics (e.g., age, gender), neighborhood factors (e.g., perceptions of park safety), and park factors (e.g., park quality, facilities, availability of organized/supervised activities). Cities looking to adopt Greenspace policies should consider three key goals: improving access; increasing investment; and addressing equity, not just to expand park access but also to promote park use.

City leaders have the opportunity to take action to unlock the physical, mental, and environmental benefits of parks and greenspaces. There is a significant—and urgent—opportunity for local policy action to chart a new, greener, and healthier future.

RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

Greenspace in American Cities: How Access to Parks and Nature Can Improve Health and Well-Being

This report by CityHealth and Trust for Public Land serves as a road map for city leaders to tap into greenspace policies as solutions to improve health outcomes throughout communities.

Why Use Policy to Improve Greenspace Access and Equity?

The way cities plan, fund, and develop public spaces impacts people's daily lives—from access to parks and trails to the benefits of trees and greenspaces. When cities set clear policies for parks and public greenspace, they can ensure these spaces are available, well maintained, and distributed fairly. Without strong policies, greenspace improvements may be scattered or short-lived, or may fail to reach the neighborhoods that need them most.

Greenspace policies provide a framework for thoughtful action by:

1. **Setting the vision.** Access-focused policies like the 10-minute walk goal and tree canopy coverage define what cities want to achieve. They establish clear benchmarks for decision-making to ensure every project, ordinance, or investment aligns with the city's commitment to public health and access to public greenspace.

2. **Ensuring sustainable investment.** Meeting or exceeding the national median for per-capita greenspace spending helps ensure that parks are well maintained, safe, and inviting. High-quality public greenspaces are vital for maximizing health and community benefits.

3. **Targeting need.** Prioritizing parks and tree canopy in neighborhoods that are both lacking in greenspaces and also burdened by poorer health outcomes helps close the health equity gap.

4. **Embedding resident voice.** Engaging residents, especially those in areas with limited park access, in planning and policy decisions leads to better, more inclusive outcomes. When community members help shape policies, decisions made about parks will better reflect the community's needs.

5. **Correcting injustices.** Cities can undo harmful policies and systems that have created gaps in park access by using an equity lens in land use, funding, and planning decisions. Thoughtful policies can address current and prevent future disparities.

City leaders have the power to take action by using policy as a tool to direct resources where they are needed most—especially in neighborhoods that have been historically overlooked due to unfair policies such as biased lending and exclusionary zoning. By setting clear greenspace goals, city leaders can guide investments where they will have the biggest impact, ensuring that all residents—no matter where they live—can enjoy the benefits of nature.

CityHealth's Greenspace Policy Solution

Cities can earn gold, silver, or bronze medals under CityHealth's Greenspace policy criteria, reflecting progressively stronger commitments to maintaining

and expanding access to parks and greenspace, making higher per-capita investments, and establishing clearer equity benchmarks. While all levels unlock the valuable benefits of greenspaces, a gold medal reflects a best-in-class approach with robust equity requirements to ensure resources reach the communities that need them most. By working toward gold medal status, cities can improve:

- **Mental health and well-being.** Access to greenspaces reduces stress, anxiety, and depression.[13] Studies show even brief exposure to nature can improve mood, enhance focus, and reduce psychological distress.[14]

- **Public safety.** Well-maintained parks and tree canopies are linked to lower crime rates.[15] They foster community connection and serve as spaces where residents feel safer and more engaged.

- **Physical health.** Greenspaces encourage physical activity—from walking and cycling to organized sports[16]—which helps reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes.[17]

- **Environmental resilience.** Parks and trees mitigate the urban heat island effect,[18] improve air quality,[19] and manage stormwater[20]—helping cities adapt to climate change while reducing infrastructure costs.

- **Social connection.** Across the 100 most populous U.S. cities, residents of cities with the highest ParkScore® rankings are more socially connected and engaged with their neighbors than residents who live in cities with lower-ranking park systems.[21]

- **Quality of life.** High-quality greenspaces make cities more desirable places to live, attracting residents and businesses alike.[22] Greenspaces enhance community identity and instill a sense of pride among residents.[23]

- **Economic prosperity.** Vibrant parks boost property values, encourage tourism, and create jobs, contributing to cities' economic health.[24],[25]
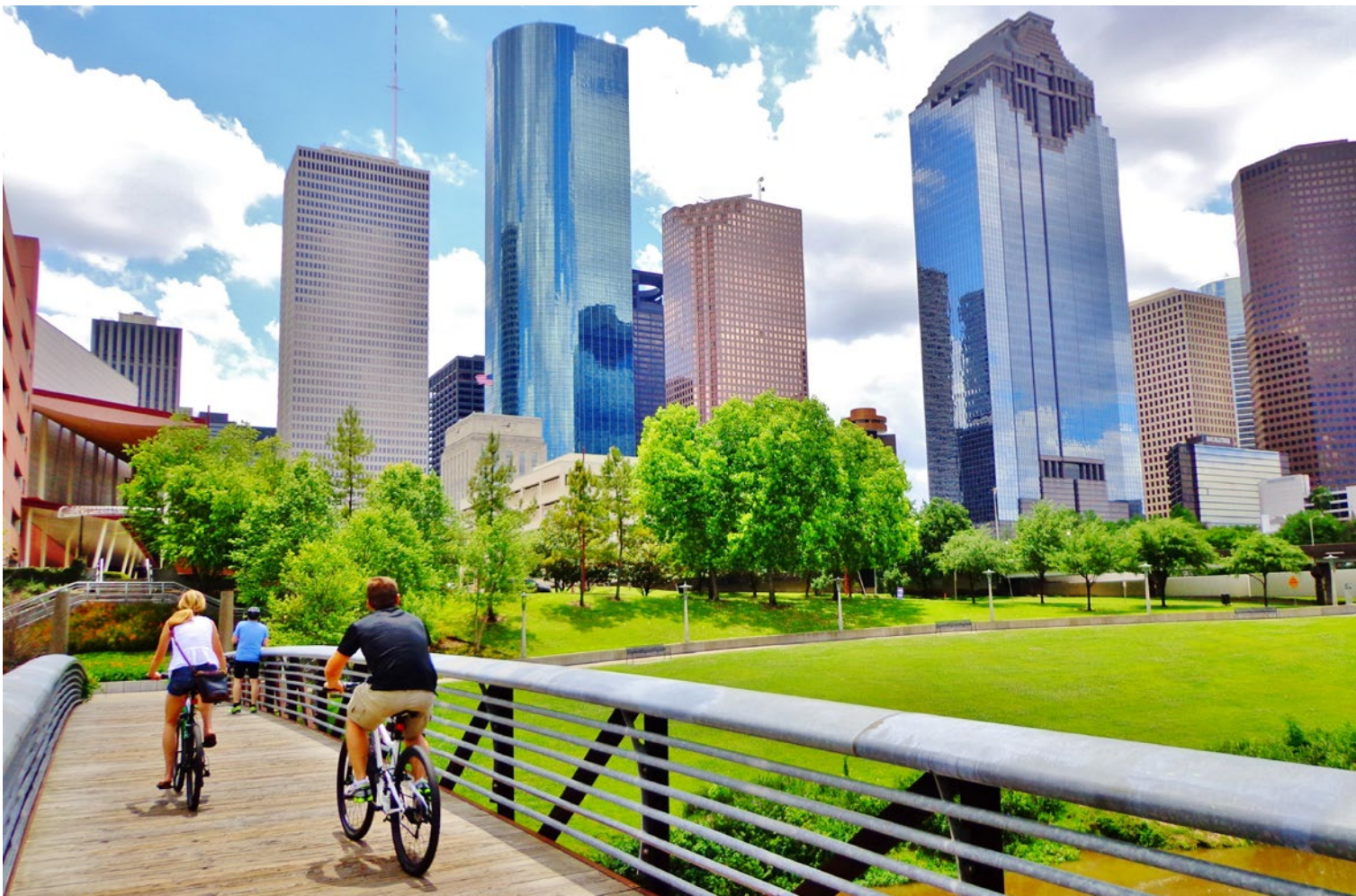
How Does a City Quality for a Greenspace Medal?

To qualify for a CityHealth Greenspace medal, a city must formally adopt Greenspace goals through legislative measures that establish a broad vision for access and quality. These goal-setting policies provide a foundation for implementing regulations and standards while ensuring coordination across multiple agencies, including housing, transportation, and land use.

A citywide strategy is essential for achieving equitable park access. This requires planning that extends beyond individual parks, considering accessibility and inclusion in new developments, as well as solutions for underserved areas through land acquisition, partnerships, or shared-use agreements.

The most effective policies are often included in long-range planning documents, such as comprehensive plans or general plans, which shape other city initiatives,

including parks master plans and urban forestry strategies. However, policies adopted in other frameworks—such as parks and recreation master plans, urban forestry plans, sustainability or climate plans, ordinances, or resolutions—also play crucial roles. What matters most is that the policies are cross-cutting, accountable, and integrated into citywide efforts.

This table highlights the layered approach needed for effective Greenspace policy solutions. The comprehensive plan serves as the cornerstone; it provides an overarching vision and goals that guide all other frameworks, ensuring citywide alignment and accountability. While other plans and policies, such as parks master plans, sustainability strategies, ordinances, and zoning regulations, play critical roles in implementation, the comprehensive plan provides the unifying framework.

Table 1. City Plan Types and Their Roles and Benefits in Greenspace Policy

Type of Plan or Policy Document	Role in Greenspace Policy	Benefits
Comprehensive plan / general plan	Sets a citywide vision and long-term goals for greenspace access and quality, ensuring cross-agency accountability.	Directs resources toward areas of greatest need by establishing equity-driven priorities and measurable goals across all departments.
Parks and recreation master plan	Provides detailed guidance for the management, development, and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities.	Supports implementation of comprehensive goals by identifying priority areas for investment and specific strategies to address gaps in park access.
Urban forestry plan	Focuses on tree canopy goals, identifying strategies for urban greening and ecological health.	Enables targeted efforts to improve tree coverage in underserved areas, addressing disparities in canopy distribution and urban heat island effects.
Sustainability or climate plan	Addresses greenspace as part of broader environmental and climate resilience strategies.	Aligns greenspace investments with climate resilience goals, focusing on vulnerable communities to mitigate climate impacts and enhance equity.
Ordinances and resolutions	Codify specific goals and actions into enforceable laws or formal commitments by the city.	Establish legal mechanisms to prioritize equitable resource distribution, such as requiring funds or park projects to be allocated based on data-driven measures of need. Can include requirements for equity audits or transparency in implementation.
Zoning and land use regulations	Establish land use requirements, incentives, or standards to support greenspace goals through private development.	Enable equitable outcomes by requiring developers to contribute to greenspace in underserved areas, setting minimum greenspace standards for developments, and incentivizing affordable housing projects with integrated greenspace. Policies can also address inequities through inclusionary zoning or density bonuses linked to park access improvements.

To drive meaningful change, policies must be designed with a clear focus on structural, procedural, and distributional equity. Structural equity ensures that Greenspace policies address systemic barriers—such as land use patterns, historical disinvestment, and exclusionary zoning—that have contributed to disparities in park access. Procedural equity ensures that community members, particularly those from historically underserved neighborhoods, have a meaningful voice in shaping policies and decisions that affect their access to greenspace. Distributional equity ensures that resources, funding, and park improvements are prioritized in the areas of greatest need, rather than being allocated based on existing advantages.[26]

By embedding these equity principles into policy design, cities can ensure that greenspace investments do more than expand park access: They can help dismantle long-standing inequities, empower communities, and create healthier, more resilient urban environments for all residents.

Structural equity ensures that greenspace policies address systemic barriers—such as land use patterns, historical disinvestment, and exclusionary zoning—that have contributed to disparities in park access.

What Are the Requirements for Gold, Silver, and Bronze Medals?

GOLD LEVEL & REQUIREMENTS

GOLD

Prioritize directing resources towards defined underserved communities.

GREENSPACE EQUITY

- Meet the criteria for the silver medal.
- Meet the criteria for the bronze medal, in either park access or tree canopy.
- Build on the bronze medal criteria by explicitly prioritizing underserved or disinvested neighborhoods—those identified using additional data that indicates risk, such as low income, poor health outcomes, or high exposure to heat, pollution, or other environmental risks.

SILVER

Commit to sustainable greenspace funding, meeting or exceeding the national per-capita spending median.

GREENSPACE INVESTMENT

- Meet the criteria for the bronze medal, in either park access or tree canopy.
- Meet the national median of $66 per-capita city spending (in 2020 dollars) on parks and greenspaces.
- TPL uses the following steps to determine eligibility for a silver medal:

  1. Calculate each city's three-year average for spending on parks and greenspace using TPL's City Park Facts survey (see box).
  2. Adjust spending to account for cost-of-living differences using the Bureau of Economic Analysis's Regional Price Parity Index.
  3. Adjust investment numbers to 2020 dollars using the seasonally adjusted Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers created by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The threshold that cities must meet to achieve the silver medal is $66 in 2020 dollars.
  4. Track city spending to ensure funds are maintained at or above the $66 threshold in 2020 dollars based on a three-year average. If a city has previously qualified for the silver medal, that city must maintain spending within $10 of the $66 threshold to continue to qualify for the silver medal in subsequent years.

BRONZE

Establish measurable citywide goals for park access or tree canopy coverage, formalized in public policy.

PARK ACCESS

- Include a target of 100% of residents within a 10-minute walk of a park.
- Include a deadline to achieve 100% access by 2040.
- Ensure the goal has been formally adopted or ratified by the city, and there is evidence of this adoption.

TREE CANOPY

- Include a defined tree canopy coverage target.
- Include a time frame for reaching the target in tree canopy coverage.
- Ensure the goal has been formally adopted or ratified by the city, and there is evidence of this adoption.

CITY PARK FACTS (CPF) SURVEY

- CPF is an annual survey conducted by TPL of the parks departments within the U.S.'s 100 largest cities. CPF collects data on how much money is being spent on parks by city agencies, other public agencies, special districts, and private groups.

- Data within CPF reflects actual dollars spent— not budgeted— during the previous fiscal year.

- This calculation excludes dollars spent on programming; "non-park" facilities such as professional sports stadiums, zoos, museums, and aquariums; funds from private conservancies for public parks; and monetized volunteer hours.

Requirements for the Gold Medal: Greenspace Equity

The gold medal prioritizes greenspace equity, focusing on access to parks and tree canopy coverage for underserved communities. This goal encourages cities to use demographic, socioeconomic, and health data to identify neighborhoods that would benefit most from greenspace improvements, addressing historical disparities in access and environmental health. The gold level supports a vision in which all residents, regardless of their socioeconomic background, can experience the health, social, and environmental benefits of well-maintained greenspaces, fostering a more inclusive and resilient urban environment.

Your goal medal should take your bronze policy a step further by creating a goal, codified in city policy, to prioritize greenspace in underserved or disinvested neighborhoods.

Cities can define neighborhoods that are underserved, disinvested, or both in one of two ways:

- **Within the goal itself.** Park access and tree canopy goals may explicitly include criteria for identifying underserved communities. For example, a city's goal might state that greenspace investments will prioritize neighborhoods with high asthma rates and poor air quality.

- **By referencing an external definition.** Park access and tree canopy goals may state a commitment to equity by referring to an established definition or set of equity criteria located in the same document, or in a different document. For instance, a parks master plan might set a goal to prioritize "environmental justice neighborhoods," as defined in the city's climate action plan. Or a city may have a goal to increase tree canopy, prioritizing neighborhoods identified using an established tool, which takes into account sociodemographic data, health data, and environmental risk data.

Santa Ana's Park Equity Policy Prioritizes Environmental Justice Neighborhoods

The open space element of Santa Ana's General Plan prioritizes investing resources toward areas that the city has defined as underserved or disinvested and in need of additional support:

- **Policy OS-1.4—Park Distribution**
  "Ensure that all city residents have access to public parks, recreation facilities, or trails in the City of Santa Ana, within a 10-minute walking and biking distance of their homes. Prioritize park provision, programs, and partnerships in park-deficient and environmental justice areas."

- **Policy OS-1.8—Land Acquisition and Equitable Distribution**
  "Acquire available lands for parks, open space, greenways and trail corridors, with priority given to sites that are within park-deficient and environmental justice areas."

Within the General Plan, the city also clearly defines environmental justice (EJ) areas:

- "An EJ community, or environmental justice community, is an area of the City where residents have the highest risk of exposure to pollution in the air, water, and soil. This pollution may be caused by passing vehicles (cars and trucks) or by the daily activities of businesses and institutions. Residents in these areas also tend to be burdened by socioeconomic and health issues, such as higher rates of language barriers, poverty, and asthma. Such areas also tend to experience lower rates of investment and improvements from individuals, private companies, and public agencies. All of these factors can lead to unequal opportunities to lead a healthy and prosperous life."

Columbus's Tree Equity Goal Identifies Priority Neighborhoods

The Urban Forestry Master Plan of Columbus, Ohio, includes goals that set a tree canopy goal and prioritize historically underinvested areas.

GOAL 1 of Columbus's Urban Forestry Master Plan commits to achieving a citywide tree canopy cover of 40 percent by 2050. This target provides a long-term vision while ensuring accountability by defining both a measurable outcome and a specific timeline.

GOAL 3: Invest in Equitable Canopy Across All Neighborhoods by 2030." The city clearly states how investments will be targeted using the priority planting analysis. A social equity index was developed to assess and to identify these neighborhoods. The index includes nine environmental, economic, demographic, and health factors:

- Asthma prevalence
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) prevalence
- Poor mental health prevalence
- Nonwhite populations
- High school graduation rate
- Median household income
- Family poverty
- Property crime rates
- Violent crime rates

Requirements for the Silver Medal: Greenspace Investment

The silver medal emphasizes the importance of investing in greenspace by meeting or exceeding the national median for per-capita greenspace spending ($66 per capita in 2020 dollars). Such investments demonstrate a city's commitment to maintaining and enhancing parks and tree coverage as essential public infrastructure, ensuring these resources are accessible and sustainable.

To achieve the silver medal, you must first meet either the tree canopy or park access criteria for the bronze medal. Additionally, your city must reach a target amount of public dollars spent on parks and greenspaces that meets or exceeds the national median, adjusted for local cost of living and inflation. Eligibility for a silver medal is determined using City Park Facts to calculate your city's spending based on a three-year average. This number is then adjusted for cost of living and to 2020 dollars. To maintain a medal, a city's three-year average must remain within $10 of the national median per-capita outlay of $66.

Two important notes on these criteria:

- The criteria are based on dollars spent, not dollars budgeted.

- Though the criteria do not require an investment policy or goal, it helpful to have one in place to both achieve and maintain an appropriate level of spending.

Saint Paul's Resources Allocation Policy Sets the Stage for Park Investment

A strong policy that directs funding to parks can help cities meet CityHealth's silver medal investment criteria by ensuring sustained and equitable park access.

For example, Saint Paul, Minnesota, has made parks a central priority by designating them as one of the nine core values in the city's Comprehensive Plan. The parks and recreation element reinforces this commitment with Goal 1, "Equitable Allocation of Programs, Resources, and Amenities," which includes:

- **POLICY PR-4:** Prioritizing investment to ensure all residents have access to a park within a 10-minute walk.

- **POLICY PR-5:** Directing resources toward maintaining and improving community centers, play areas, pools, and other amenities to meet common minimum standards.

By embedding park investment into long-term planning, Saint Paul is creating a strong foundation for equitable, high-quality park access.

Requirements for the Bronze Medal: Park Access or Tree Canopy

The bronze medal requirements aim to encourage cities to make a public and formal commitment to enhancing residents' access to greenspace. By setting clear goals for either park access or tree canopy coverage, cities demonstrate a foundational commitment to creating a healthier, greener environment. Establishing this baseline goal helps cities prioritize greenspace as a valuable public resource that improves quality of life, health, and environmental resilience.

To achieve the bronze medal, cities need to develop a formal policy or planning goal for either park access or tree canopy coverage. This goal must be in an officially adopted and publicly accessible plan or document, such as a comprehensive plan, parks master plan, or urban forestry plan.

Philadelphia's Park Access Goal and New Orleans's Tree Canopy Goal Are Specific, Measurable, and Timebound

Objective 6.3.1 of Philadelphia's Citywide Vision 2035 is to "ensure that all Philadelphians live within a 10-minute walk of a neighborhood park or a recreation center." This objective includes 100 percent of residents and a time frame of 2035, and it has been formally adopted by the city—all elements required to achieve the bronze medal for park access.

The New Orleans Reforestation Plan sets a goal for 2040 of bringing every neighborhood up to a 10 percent canopy coverage threshold, requiring 100,000 trees to be planted in neighborhoods across the city. This goal includes a target and a time frame, and it has been formally adopted by the city.

City leaders, urban planners, and community advocates can follow the steps in this section to develop effective and equitable greenspace goals that will make an impact. Each section below offers step-by-step guidance on how to develop and implement robust greenspace policies that meet the criteria for bronze, silver, and gold medals.

Whether your city is focused on expanding access to parks, increasing tree canopy, or ensuring equitable investment in greenspaces, these steps will help build a policy that aligns with the unique needs of your community and promotes lasting health, environmental, and social benefits. Adopting strong Greenspace policy solutions is a first step in unlocking the full range of benefits parks and greenspaces offer.

Steps to Earning a Bronze Medal: Develop a Citywide Park Access or Tree Canopy Goal

Setting citywide goals for park access or tree canopy coverage is the foundation for creating equitable, healthy, and resilient communities. A clearly defined, measurable goal

PRO TIP

Before setting a greenspace goal, use tools such as ParkServe or Tree Equity Score, along with community input, to understand your city's current parks and tree canopy status. Knowing where you're starting from ensures you set a goal that is ambitious yet achievable.

establishes a shared vision that mobilizes stakeholders, guides investments, and sets the stage for long-term improvements. Without such goals, cities risk perpetuating inequities and missing opportunities to maximize public health and environmental benefits.

For park access, this commitment ensures that all residents can experience the mental, physical, and social benefits of parks within their daily lives; the tree canopy commitment enhances urban environments by improving air quality, mitigating urban heat islands, and contributing to climate resilience. These goals lay the groundwork for informed decision-making and inclusive policies that benefit everyone, especially those in underserved communities.

STEPS TO SUCCESS

1. **KNOW YOUR STARTING POINT.**
   - **Assess park access:** Use available tools, such as ParkServe, to analyze current levels of park access within a 10-minute walk.

   - **Assess tree canopy:** Measure current tree canopy coverage using GIS data, satellite imagery, urban forestry software, or tools such as Tree Equity Score to determine current tree canopy coverage.

   - In addition to looking at qualitative data, **engage residents in discussions about their greenspaces,** host in-person assessment and feedback sessions, and learn where residents see room for improvement in greenspace access.

2. SET A CLEAR, MEASURABLE GOAL.

- **Use the results of your assessment to understand where you can improve.** You can focus on park access, tree canopy, or both areas.

- **Set a park access goal**. Aim to achieve access to a park by 100 percent of residents within a 10-minute walk, with a target completion date of 2040.

- **Set a tree canopy goal.** Set a target percentage and time frame that will enhance air quality, reduce heat, and improve aesthetics in line with urban forestry best practices.

3. ESTABLISH A FORMAL POLICY.

- **Determine where this goal should be embedded and whether a layered approach is needed.** Including greenspace equity goals in the comprehensive plan ensures alignment across city departments, making it a shared priority in long-term decision-making. The comprehensive plan serves as a unifying framework, reinforcing accountability and coordination. Additionally, integrating supporting language into other plans—such as parks master plans, sustainability strategies, ordinances, and zoning regulations—helps translate the vision into actionable policies and projects, increasing the likelihood of implementation.

- **Draft and publicly document the goal within an official city plan.** Codifying the greenspace equity goal in a comprehensive plan, parks master plan, or urban forestry plan solidifies the city's commitment and provides a clear directive for implementation. A well-documented goal ensures consistency across policies, guides decision-making, and strengthens accountability over time.

4. SECURE POLICY ADOPTION.

- **Ensure the policy is formally adopted by city leadership and widely accessible to the public.** Document the adoption with language in the document, meeting minutes, resolutions, or other city records.

- **Strengthen implementation by incorporating supporting language into zoning codes, ordinances, and funding policies.**

WAYS TO IMPROVE PARK AND TREE CANOPY ACCESS

Setting a strong park access or tree canopy goal is just the first step—achieving it requires strategic action. Cities can use a variety of approaches to expand and enhance greenspaces, ensuring that all residents, especially those in underserved neighborhoods, benefit from healthier environments. From policy changes to creative land use strategies, the following solutions can help cities make measurable progress toward their park and tree canopy goals.

PARK ACCESS SOLUTIONS

- **Adopt development policies:** Cities can use tools such as park dedication ordinances (PDOs) and impact fees to ensure new development contributes to creating or improving parks. These policies require developers to provide land, funding, or both for greenspaces, ensuring that growing communities have adequate access to parks

- **Repurpose vacant and underutilized land.** Transforming vacant lots, underused spaces, and brownfields into parks can increase access. These sites can be revitalized into community greenspaces, offering recreation opportunities and addressing blight, particularly in underserved neighborhoods.

- **Implement community schoolyards.** Opening schoolyards to the public outside of school hours creates shared spaces for recreation and gathering. This strategy maximizes existing resources, providing safe, accessible greenspaces, especially in urban areas where land for new parks is limited.

- **Connect people to parks with trails and transit.** Investing in greenways, trails, and public transit options improves access to parks by making them easier to reach without a car. These connections can also promote active transportation and expand access for residents in park-poor areas.

RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

- TPL's *Development Policy to Parks* can help cities better understand how to maximize development policy for parks.

- TPL's *Adding Green* paper outlines considerations for cities looking to maximize vacant and underutilized land for greenspace.

City Spotlight: Atlanta's Community Schoolyards Initiative

Atlanta is expanding park access and closing its outdoor equity gap by transforming public schoolyards into vibrant, nature-rich parks. In partnership with Atlanta Public Schools, Park Pride, the Urban Land Institute Atlanta, and TPL, the city launched the Community Schoolyards program, reimagining school grounds as public greenspaces open to neighborhoods after school hours, on evenings, and weekends. Since 2019, the program has redesigned and revitalized 10 schoolyards, delivering outdoor access to more than 20,000 residents—many of whom live in communities with significantly less park space than higher-income, predominantly white neighborhoods.

The initiative targets schools in neighborhoods with limited park access and a high potential to serve surrounding communities. Student-led design workshops give young people and their families a meaningful role in shaping each space, ensuring the schoolyards reflect local needs and priorities. These sites are more than places to play—they create opportunities for learning, connection, and environmental stewardship. In transforming public schoolyards into safe, accessible greenspaces, Atlanta is expanding park access and demonstrating how thoughtful reinvestment in public land can foster healthier, more resilient, and more equitable communities. With this success, new partners—Children & Nature Network and KABOOM!—have joined the Atlanta effort, and TPL has expanded into adjoining school districts in Fulton and DeKalb Counties.
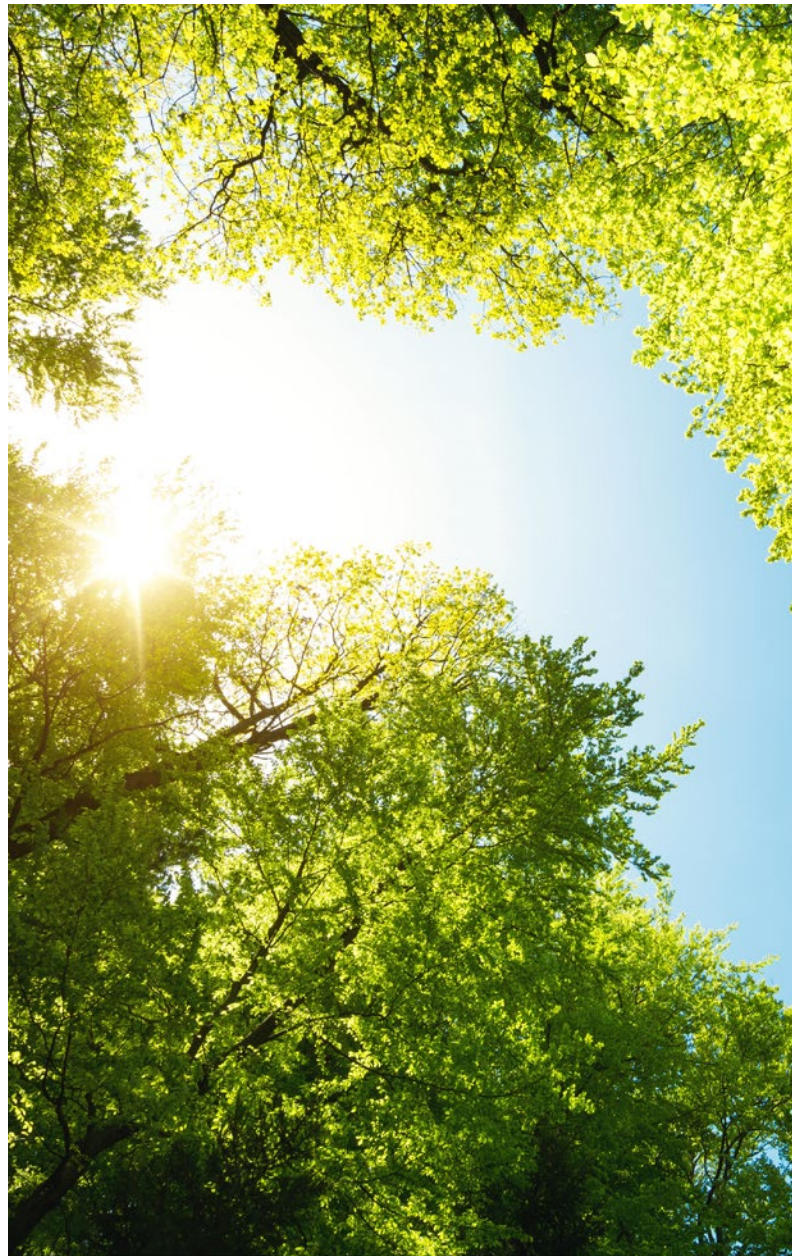
TREE CANOPY SOLUTIONS

- **Adopt tree protection and planting policies.** Cities can strengthen their tree canopy by enacting ordinances that both protect mature trees and require tree planting in new developments. These policies help preserve existing canopy coverage while ensuring long-term tree canopy protection and expansion as neighborhoods evolve.

- **Leverage development projects.** Through zoning requirements or incentives, cities can encourage or mandate tree planting as part of private developments. These policies can integrate trees into parking lots, streetscapes, and other urban designs, expanding canopy coverage where it's most needed.

- **Create incentive programs for private landowners.** Programs that provide free or subsidized trees, tax incentives, or technical assistance for planting and maintaining trees on private property can significantly expand the urban canopy. This is especially impactful in areas where public land is limited.

City Spotlight: Fort Worth's Commitment to Urban Forestry

In a city that loses roughly 50 acres of natural open space to development every week, protecting and preserving trees and greenspaces is critical. Recognizing the vital role of urban trees in mitigating extreme heat, improving air quality, and fostering community well-being, Fort Worth has taken action to expand and protect its tree canopy. The city, in partnership with Texas Trees Foundation, developed its first-ever Urban Forest Master Plan (UFMP)—a strategic policy framework to increase canopy coverage, integrate urban forestry into climate resilience efforts, and prioritize tree planting in historically underserved neighborhoods.

As Texas's longest-running Tree City USA, Fort Worth has set an ambitious goal to grow its canopy from 19 percent to 30 percent by 2050, requiring 76,200 new trees to be planted annually. The UFMP also strengthens tree protection ordinances, preserves mature trees, and improves management of public and private tree resources.

Fort Worth's commitment to greenspaces is also reflected in the Good Natured initiative, which seeks to bring public and private partners together to shape and enhance greenspace investment. Good Natured aims to preserve at least 10,000 acres of green space—including parkland—over the next five years to mitigate the impacts of rapid population growth and development. Further, in partnership with TPL, the city is exploring the impact of converting publicly owned lands to parks through the Park Equity Accelerator.

Through initiatives such as these, Fort Worth demonstrates how cities can use policy-driven solutions to create healthier, more resilient communities.

Steps to Earning a Silver Medal: Increase Investment in Parks and Greenspaces

> **PRO TIP**
> This criterion looks at funds spent, not funds budgeted. If you do not qualify for a medal now, increasing spending on parks and greenspaces now can position you for a medal in the future.

Sustainable financial investment in parks and greenspaces demonstrates a city's commitment to the long-term well-being of its residents and the environment. Adequate funding ensures that greenspaces are safe, clean, and well maintained, enabling them to serve as vibrant community hubs. Cities that meet or exceed the national median for per-capita greenspace spending ($66 per capita in 2020 dollars) show they value the returns on this investment, which include improved public health, environmental resilience, and economic vitality.

Consistent funding also provides stability for parks departments to develop and maintain greenspaces without being hindered by budget shortfalls. By prioritizing greenspace investments, cities position themselves as leaders in livability, sustainability, and equity, attracting residents, businesses, and tourists alike.

Eligibility for a silver medal is determined based on a three-year average of city spending on parks and greenspaces. This number is then adjusted for cost of living and to 2020 dollars. To maintain a medal, a city's three-year average must remain within $10 of the national median per-capita outlay of $66.

STEPS TO SUCCESS

1. UNDERSTAND CURRENT SPENDING.

- **Use City Park Facts to assess current public spending** on parks and greenspaces, including operating and capital expenses.
- **Exclude costs related to programming,** non-park facilities (e.g., sports stadiums, museums), privately funded improvements in public parks, and monetized volunteer hours.
- **Adjust this number** based on cost-of-living indexes and to 2020 dollars.

2. INCREASE OR MAINTAIN SPENDING.

- **Use funding mechanisms,** such as those described in the section below, to support parks and green spaces.

3. MAINTAIN YOUR MEDAL STATUS.

- **Track spending annually,** aiming for consistency within a $10 range of the target amount across the three most recent fiscal years. This financial stability reinforces the city's dedication to providing long-term access and care for greenspaces.

WAYS TO INCREASE GREENSPACE INVESTMENT

Reliable funding is the backbone of a thriving park system. Investment in parks—spanning capital projects, ongoing maintenance, programming, and administration—ensures greenspaces remain vibrant, accessible, and central to community life. Without consistent financial support, new parks struggle to materialize, existing parks deteriorate, and community engagement dwindles due to a lack of inviting and well-maintained spaces.

Unfortunately, the perception of parks as "nice to have" rather than essential infrastructure leaves their budgets vulnerable during economic downturns. To counter this perception, cities must prioritize parks as integral to public health, environmental resilience, and economic growth.

A range of funding mechanisms exists to help cities establish sustainable financial support for their greenspaces. From federal grants to voter-approved tax measures, these tools empower cities to grow and sustain their park systems.

RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

Fundamentals of Funding for Local Parks and Greenspace provides a comprehensive overview of funding for parks.

The following are key approaches to bolster greenspace investment:

- **Federal and state grant programs.** Federal and state agencies offer grant programs tailored to diverse urban needs, such as transportation, climate resilience, and cultural infrastructure. These grants recognize parks as multifunctional assets, addressing health, equity, and environmental goals. The most common federal funding sources for parks include the National Park Service's Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLP), the Department of Transportation's Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program, and the Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields Program.

- **Bonds and taxes.** Voter-approved bonds, sales taxes, and property taxes are reliable ways to generate dedicated funding for parks and greenspaces. Historically, these funding methods have been used for conservation; more cities are now adopting these strategies to support urban park development.

- **Parkland dedication ordinances and developer impact fees.** Parkland dedication ordinances require developers to contribute land or funding for parks, ensuring new developments provide greenspaces. Some cities allow a fee-in-lieu option or combine land donations with fees to fund park improvements. Impact fees, commonly used for infrastructure such as roads, can also be applied to parks to meet community needs.

- **Public-private partnerships.** Collaboration with private organizations can help offset costs and enhance park maintenance, programming, and development. These partnerships, including conservancies and corporate sponsorships, must be carefully managed to maintain public control over park spaces.

- **Environmental Impact Bonds (EIBs).** EIBs fund green infrastructure projects by attracting private investment, with repayment tied to project outcomes. While not yet widely used, EIBs offer an innovative option for cities lacking upfront capital to improve parks and infrastructure.

City Spotlight: Denver's Long-Term Investment in Parks and Climate Resilience

In partnership with TPL, Denver has demonstrated its commitment to sustainable greenspace funding through two groundbreaking Measure 2A voter-approved sales tax initiatives. In 2018, voters passed the first Measure 2A, establishing a 0.25 percent sales tax that generates approximately $40 million annually to support the city's Parks Legacy Fund. This dedicated funding source provides long-term financial stability for land acquisition, park development, and ongoing maintenance, ensuring equitable access to parks, trails, and natural areas across Denver.

Building on this success, Denver voters approved a second Measure 2A in 2020, creating the Climate Protection Fund, which also generates $40 million annually to support climate action projects. Notably, at least 50 percent of these funds are invested in communities of color and under-resourced neighborhoods, reinforcing Denver's focus on equity in both environmental and park investments.

Together, these sustainable funding measures have unlocked more than $80 million each year in perpetuity for parks, greenspaces, and climate resilience initiatives. By establishing reliable, dedicated funding streams, Denver has positioned itself as a leader in long-term greenspace investment, ensuring its parks system supports health, environmental sustainability, and equitable access for generations to come.

Steps to Earning a Gold Medal: Prioritize Equity in Park Access or Tree Canopy Goals

Cities that embed equity into their greenspace goals can directly address the lasting effects of disinvestment, environmental hazards, and health disparities. Targeting investment in historically underserved areas reduces risks such as extreme heat and poor air quality while advancing environmental justice. Prioritizing these communities fosters healthier, safer, and more connected neighborhoods—ensuring all residents benefit from parks and trees.

STEPS TO SUCCESS

1. IDENTIFY UNDERSERVED NEIGHBORHOODS.

- **Go beyond access gaps.** Use demographic, socioeconomic, and environmental health data (e.g., race/ethnicity, income, asthma rates, heat vulnerability) to locate neighborhoods facing multiple disparities. It is also helpful to look at historical investment data to see whether there are areas that have been chronically underfunded.

2. DEFINE EQUITY PRIORITIES IN POLICY LANGUAGE.

- **Clearly define underserved populations** in your policy. Use this definition to ensure accountability and focus resources where they are needed most.

- **Explicitly reference your definition for clarity.** If your definition came from another plan (e.g., using a definition of environmental justice neighborhoods from a climate action plan), note where.

3. SECURE POLICY ADOPTION.

- **Ensure the policy is formally adopted by city leadership and widely accessible to the public.** Document the adoption with language in the document, meeting minutes, resolutions, or other city records.

- **Embed the equity goal in key plans,** such as the comprehensive plan, parks master plan, sustainability plan, or urban forestry strategy, to ensure citywide alignment.

- **Strengthen implementation** by incorporating supporting language into zoning codes, ordinances, and funding policies.

WAYS TO INTEGRATE EQUITY INTO GREENSPACE DECISIONS

- **Develop cross-sector teams.** Forming teams that include city departments, community organizations, and residents ensures greenspace policies address diverse needs. Collaboration helps align goals, pool resources, and create solutions that reflect local priorities.

- **Engage the community.** Authentic community engagement is essential for equitable greenspace development. Involve residents, especially those from underserved areas, in decision-making processes to ensure policies reflect their needs. Engaging the community builds trust and fosters shared ownership. TPL's Common Ground Framework presents community engagement strategies, policy recommendations, and research needs that can build community power through greenspace.

- **Direct resources toward areas of highest need.** Use data that goes beyond park access alone, along with input from residents to identify neighborhoods with the greatest need for greenspaces, focusing on areas with historical underinvestment. Allocate funding and resources to these areas to close access gaps and improve health, safety, and environmental outcomes for underserved communities.

- **Implement anti-displacement and equitable development strategies.** Prevent displacement by pairing greenspace projects with policies such as affordable housing protections, rent stabilization, and community land trusts. Ensure new or improved greenspaces benefit existing residents by integrating economic development opportunities, such as local hiring and small business support. Great Parks Should Not Uproot Communities reviews the growing literature on green gentrification and recommends promising strategies that public agencies and nonprofit organizations can take to limit displacement.

City skyline of Los Angeles downtown in California during sunset from Echo Lake Park.

City Spotlight: Los Angeles's Equity-First Approach at Taylor Yard

Los Angeles is setting a precedent for equitable park development through its Taylor Yard Equity Strategy—a community-driven framework ensuring that greenspace investments directly benefit historically under-served neighborhoods. Recognizing the risk of green gentrification, the city partnered with the Los Angeles Regional Open Space and Affordable Housing Collaborative, the University of California Los Angeles, and other agencies to align park expansion with housing stability. By integrating anti-displacement measures, such as affordable housing protections, rent stabilization policies, and workforce development initiatives, Taylor Yard prioritizes long-term residents while expanding access to greenspace.

Through cross-sector collaboration and extensive community engagement, local voices have played a central role in shaping the project, ensuring the park meets residents' needs for recreation, climate resilience, and economic opportunity. This initiative demonstrates how cities can use policy to close greens-pace gaps while preventing displacement, setting a gold-standard approach for equitable urban development. By embedding greenspace equity into planning from the start, Los Angeles is ensuring that parks serve as anchors for healthy, stable, and thriving communities—rather than catalysts for displacement.

As cities work toward achieving CityHealth Greenspace medals, a few strategic considerations can help ensure that these policies are both impactful and resilient. This section outlines common challenges and solutions, the critical role of community engagement, and best practices for tracking and sharing progress.

Common Challenges and Solutions

CHALLENGE:

Identifying Underserved and Disinvested Areas

SOLUTION:

An equity-driven approach accounts for health disparities, environmental risks, and climate vulnerabilities that exacerbate inequities, as well as historical investment patterns. Start by looking at areas of climate vulnerabilities, such as heat islands, air quality, and flood risk; health indicators, such as asthma rates, diabetes rates, and community mental health; and economic indicators, such as income levels and car ownership. See where those areas overlap with poor park access and tree canopy. TPL's ParkServe platform contains much of this information. You can also take a thoughtful look at where disinvestment has historically occurred by gathering key demographic, economic, and health-related data from sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Environmental Protection Agency.

Many cities find value in working with local universities, nonprofit organizations, or health departments to source neighborhood-level data on race/ethnicity, income, chronic disease prevalence, and environmental stressors, such as heat and air quality. Mapping this data can clarify which areas lack equitable access to parks and trees.

CHALLENGE:

Meeting the Needs of the Community

SOLUTION:

Community engagement is essential for crafting greenspace goals that genuinely reflect the needs and aspirations of residents. Authentic and inclusive engagement ensures greenspace policies are effective, equitable, and rooted in community priorities.

- **Prioritize inclusive engagement.** Engagement efforts should proactively include historically marginalized communities. Meet residents where they are by hosting events at local schools, cultural festivals, or places of worship. Use multilingual outreach and provide food, childcare, and stipends to remove participation barriers. These practices build trust and ensure everyone has an equal voice in shaping greenspace goals.

- **Center community expertise.** Community members are experts on their lived experiences and the challenges their neighborhoods face. By integrating their

insights into greenspace planning, cities can validate quantitative data and develop solutions that address real needs. For instance, residents might prioritize shaded pathways or culturally significant design elements.

- **Empower residents as long-term partners.** Rather than limiting participation to a single planning phase, foster ongoing collaboration with the community. Establish systems for regular feedback, train residents to engage in public processes, and support the formation of park stewardship groups. This approach ensures greenspace policies remain responsive to evolving needs and builds lasting community power.

CHALLENGE:
Monitoring Progress

SOLUTION:
Monitoring and reporting on greenspace policy progress is essential for maintaining momentum, fostering public trust, and achieving sustainable impact. Strong tracking mechanisms also enable cities to make informed adjustments to their policies based on real-time insights. Cities should implement a consistent and transparent process for measuring and sharing their progress that includes the following steps:

- **Establish clear performance measures.** Develop specific metrics to measure the progress of your park access, tree canopy, and investment goals. For example:

- Percentage of residents with access to a park within a 10-minute walk
- Annual per-capita spending on greenspace compared with the national median
- Tree canopy coverage increase in underserved neighborhoods

- **Regularly review and report progress.** Set up scheduled reviews of greenspace goals and their impacts, such as annual or biannual assessments. Share findings with the public in formats that are accessible and user-friendly, such as online dashboards, community newsletters, or public meetings.

- **Promote transparency to build trust.** Transparent reporting builds community trust and strengthens support for greenspace initiatives. Share both successes and challenges openly. Explain any policy adjustments, unexpected delays, or new approaches to address challenges, reinforcing the city's commitment to continuous improvement. Public dashboards, interactive maps, and quarterly progress reports are all ways to help residents visualize changes, understand data, and stay informed.

Incorporating these considerations will not only strengthen greenspace policies but also ensure that they are truly responsive to the needs of all residents, particularly those in underserved areas. Thoughtful planning for challenges, engagement, and progress tracking will help cities create greenspace policies that contribute to equitable, sustainable, and vibrant communities.
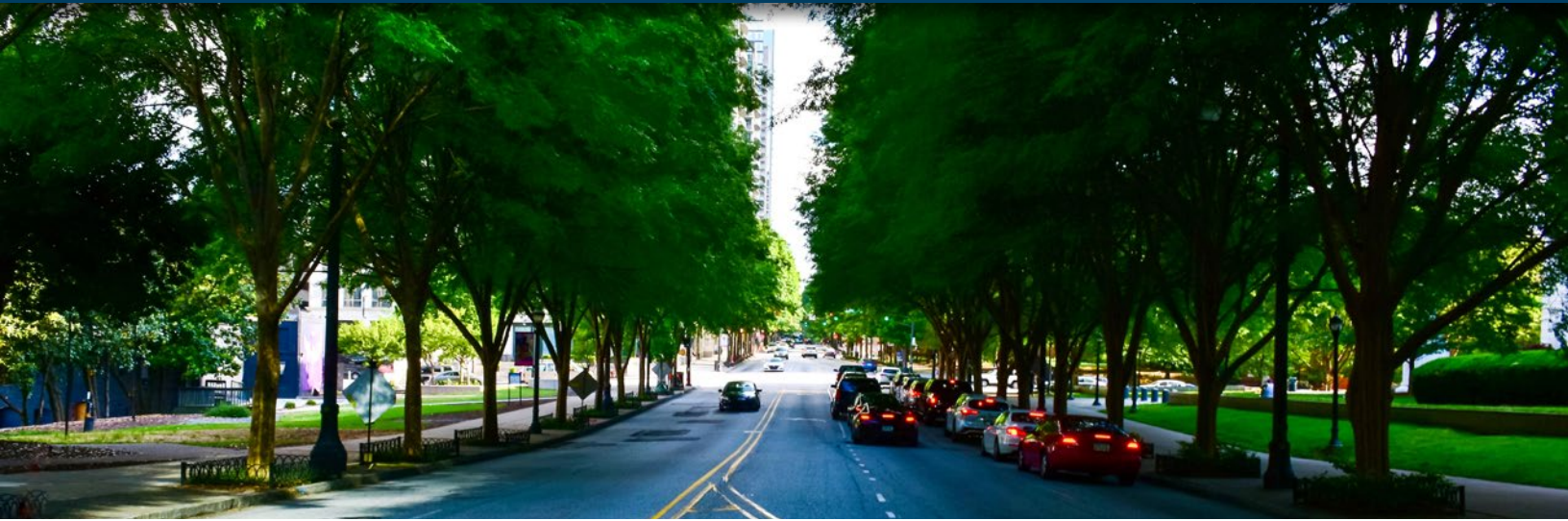
Appendix A: Greenspace Policy Checklist–Self Assessment Tool

Use this checklist to determine your city's eligibility for a bronze, silver, or gold medal. If you can check off all the criteria for a specific medal, your city is eligible for that level.

BRONZE: Park Access	Criteria Met?
Does your goal include 100% of residents within a 10-minute walk of a park?	
Does your goal include a deadline to achieve 100% access by 2040?	
Has this goal been formally adopted or ratified by the city, and is there evidence of this adoption?	

BRONZE: Tree Canopy	Criteria Met?
Does your goal include a tree canopy coverage target?	
Does your goal include a time frame for reaching the target in tree canopy coverage?	
Has this goal been formally adopted or ratified by the city, and is there evidence of this adoption?	

SILVER: Greenspace Investment	Criteria Met?
Did you meet the criteria for the bronze medal, in either park access or tree canopy?	
Does your city meet the national median of $66 per capita in 2020 dollars for city spending on parks and greenspaces? TPL uses the following steps to determine eligibility for a silver medal: • Calculate each city's three-year average for spending on parks and greenspace using TPL's City Park Facts survey. This calculation excludes dollars spent on programming; "non-park" facilities such as professional sports stadiums, zoos, museums, and aquariums; funds from private conservancies for public parks; and monetized volunteer hours. • Adjust spending to account for cost-of-living differences using the Bureau of Economic Analysis's Regional Price Parity Index. • Adjust investment numbers to 2020 dollars using the seasonally adjusted Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers created by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The threshold that cities must meet to achieve silver is $66 in 2020 dollars. If your city has already received a silver medal, you must maintain annual spending within $10 of the $66 threshold in 2020 dollars on average over three years in order to keep your medal.	
Has the city maintained that level of spending within $10 for the three most recent fiscal years? (based on a three-year average)	

GOLD: Greenspace Equity	Criteria Met?
Did you meet the criteria for the bronze medal, in either park access or tree canopy?	
Did you meet the criteria for the silver medal?	
Does your park access or tree canopy policy that qualified for the bronze medal prioritize underserved or disinvested neighborhoods?	
Have you used data, other than park access or tree canopy coverage, to identify or define underserved and disinvested neighborhoods—for example, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic, health risk, or outcome data?	

Appendix B: Glossary of Terms

Access – The ability of all residents to safely and conveniently reach parks and greenspaces—typically measured by proximity, such as the 10-Minute Walk® standard.

Accessibility – The ability of all individuals, regardless of ability, income, or location, to safely reach and use parks and greenspaces.

CityHealth – An organization that evaluates and supports policies in U.S. cities to improve public health, including greenspace access, investment, and equity, through a tiered medal system (bronze, silver, and gold).

Climate resilience – The capacity of communities, ecosystems, and infrastructure to adapt to and withstand climate-related stresses, such as extreme heat and flooding, often enhanced by greenspaces.

Community engagement – The process of involving residents in decision-making related to greenspace policies, ensuring their voices shape equitable development and investment.

Comprehensive plan – A citywide planning document that outlines long-term goals and policies for land use, including greenspace access, environmental resilience, and equity considerations.

Development impact fees – Charges imposed on developers to fund public infrastructure improvements, including parks and greenspaces, ensuring that new developments contribute to community well-being.

Distributional equity – The fair allocation of greenspace resources and investments, prioritizing historically underserved communities to address past and present disparities.

Environmental justice – The principle that all people, regardless of race, income, or geography, should have equal access to a healthy environment, including clean air, water, and greenspaces.

Equity (greenspace context) – The fair distribution of parks, tree canopy, and greenspace resources, ensuring historically underinvested communities receive targeted investments to correct past disparities.

Greenspace – Natural or planted areas in urban settings, including parks, trails, community gardens, and tree canopies, that provide environmental, social, and health benefits.

Greenspace investment – Financial commitments by cities to acquire, maintain, and improve parks, trails, and urban forests to enhance public health, climate resilience, and equity.

Greenspace policy – Laws, regulations, or guidelines that govern how cities create, maintain, and distribute greenspaces, ensuring sustainable and equitable access for all residents.

Greenspace equity – The intentional prioritization of greenspaces in historically underserved or disinvested neighborhoods to address disparities in park access, tree canopy, and environmental health.

Historically underserved or disinvested neighborhoods – Communities that have experienced systemic barriers to public and private investment, resulting in lower-quality parks, fewer trees, and greater environmental and health burdens. These neighborhoods often face additional disparities in health, environmental risk, and economic opportunity.

Inclusionary zoning – A policy requiring or incentivizing developers to provide community benefits, such as affordable housing or public greenspaces, as part of new projects.

Infrastructure resilience – The ability of public spaces, including parks and tree canopy networks, to mitigate environmental challenges such as heat waves, flooding, and air pollution.

Investment –The allocation of public resources to create, improve, and maintain parks, trails, tree canopy, and other greenspaces.

Land use policy – Regulations governing how land is developed and used, including zoning laws that influence greenspace distribution and access.

Medal criteria (CityHealth Greenspace medals) – A tiered framework (bronze, silver, and gold) used to evaluate and recognize cities' progress in greenspace access, investment, and equity.

Park access – The ability of residents to reach and use a park or greenspace, often measured by the 10-Minute Walk® standard.

Park equity – The fair and just distribution of parks and greenspace resources across all communities, ensuring quality and accessibility for all residents.

Park maintenance – The ongoing care, repair, and improvement of parks to ensure safety, usability, and ecological health.

Procedural equity – The practice of ensuring that historically excluded communities have a voice in greenspace planning, decision-making, and policy implementation.

Resilience hubs – Community spaces, including parks, designed to provide resources and shelter during climate-related disasters such as heat waves and floods.

Social infrastructure – Public spaces, including parks, that foster social interaction, community building, and civic engagement.

Structural equity – Policies and practices that address systemic barriers, such as discriminatory land use policies, to ensure long-term equity in greenspace access and investment.

Sustainability plan – A city's strategic framework for reducing environmental impact, often including goals for greenspace expansion and tree canopy enhancement.

10-Minute Walk® goal – A widely used benchmark in urban planning that ensures every resident can reach a park or greenspace within a 10-minute walk from home.

Tree canopy coverage – The layer of leaves, branches, and stems that cover the ground when viewed from above, measured to assess urban forest density and distribution.

Tree equity – The equitable distribution of tree canopy to ensure communities facing higher environmental risks receive targeted investment in urban forestry.

Trust for Public Land (TPL) – An organization focused on land conservation, urban park development, and greenspace policy advocacy.

Urban forestry plan – A policy document that sets goals for tree planting, preservation, and management to enhance urban environments and climate resilience.

Appendix C: Additional Resources

10-Minute Walk Program Resources: These compilation of resources can be used to explore tools and case studies, and find guidance on closing the park equity gap.

CityHealth's Greenspace in American Cities: This report by CityHealth and Trust for Public Land serves as a road map for city leaders to tap into greenspace policies as solutions to improve health outcomes throughout communities.

Equitable Community Development Strategies to Ensure Neighborhoods at Risk of Green Gentrification Can Thrive in Place: This report provides community-driven strategies to prevent displacement and ensure that long-standing residents benefit from new greenspace investments.

Fundamentals of Funding for Local Parks and Greenspace: This guide provides a foundational understanding of local park and greenspace funding sources, mechanisms, and best practices for sustainable investment.

Great Parks Should Not Uproot Communities: This report shares principles and approaches for creating parks that benefit communities without contributing to displacement or gentrification.

Key Park Equity Policies: Toward a 10-Minute Walk Park Equity Policy Framework: This report offers a framework and a set of model policies and strategies cities can adopt to advance park equity and increase access to quality parks.

Park Qualities: Mapping Park Experience Types: This report provides a framework for understanding and mapping the diverse experiences parks offer, supporting more inclusive and responsive park planning.

The Power of Parks to Promote Health: This report shares evidence and insights on how parks support mental and physical health, reduce disease risk, and promote health equity.

The Common Ground Framework: This report presents a shared framework for aligning cross-sector efforts around parks, health, equity, climate, and community wellbeing.

The Power of Parks to Strengthen Community: This report provides compelling examples and research showing how parks foster connection, civic pride, and a sense of belonging across communities.

From Development Policy to Parks.Expanding Park Access Through Dedication Ordinances and Impact Fees: The report offers in-depth details on the current opportunities and limitations of dedication ordinances and impact fees, identifies emerging policy trends, and outlines questions and future research needs on how these policies can increase park access and address the park equity gap.

Adding Green: This report identifies and recommends steps cities can take to convert vacant land to parks and green spaces.

Endnotes

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