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BEST PRACTICES FOR DRIVING EQUITABLE INVESTMENTS IN PARKS

Learning Objectives

• Learn to implement an equitable strategic planning process.
• Learn how to use GIS and Data Analytics for capital program decision making.
• Learn how to better serve diverse populations.
M Mitchell Silver, New York City Parks Commissioner
Jane Beesley, Deputy Director, Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District
Phil Ginsburg, General Manager, San Francisco Recreation and Park Department
OneNYC calls for transformed parks and public spaces in under-resourced and growing neighborhoods. Yorkers.

Community Parks Initiative is a key strategy to achieve this goal. Over $300 million has been set aside to make it a reality.
Framework for an Equitable Future

Photo: NYC Parks
Capital in Context

• NYC Parks spent ~ $5.7 billion on capital improvements over the past two decades

• Acquired 1,168 acres since 2001

• 81.5% New Yorkers live within a walk of a park

• Proximity vs. Quality

• Equity = Fairness
Identifying Screening Criteria

- Individuals Below Federal Poverty Line 20% or More
- Population Density 110 People Per Acre or More
- Above-Average Population Growth (2.8-2.5%)
- High Population Growth (25% or more)

Maps: NYC Parks
Focus on Park Equity

Community Parks Initiative Zones

All Public Parkland
Site Investigations

Fieldwork, Establishing Capital Investment Priorities

NYC Parks surveyed potential “CPI” parks to find parks with:

• High need for physical improvement
• Promising potential local partners
• Strong programming opportunities

Photos: NYC Parks
Equity in Context

- **215 parks** across the city received minimal capital investment - **less than** $250,000 over 20 years
Community Parks Initiative

CPI Capital Program
Invest $318M to re-create 67 community parks

Targeted Physical Improvements
111 smaller-scale physical park improvement projects
- All work done with in-house crews
- Repainting/repairing play equipment
- Repainting handball courts and multi-purpose play areas
- Repainting/repairing benches
- Improving horticultural areas and lawn restoration
- Sports coating
Building on the Foundations of Great Parks

Partnerships:
Initiate long-term outreach and community organizing

Programming:
Expand our capacity to bring recreational programming to communities that the CPI capital program sites serve

Maintenance:
Take a more targeted approach to maintaining CPI parks and parkland within CPI communities as the program moves forward
Park or parking lot?
No adults except in the company of a child

www.nyc.gov/parks
Design Precedent for New Parks

Spray Showers

Adult Fitness
Design Precedent for New Parks

Playground Ages 2-5

Fitness, Handball Courts, Gathering Areas
Design Precedent for New Parks

Planted Areas

Planting/Stormwater Capture
Design Precedent for New Parks

Multi-generational social seating
Community Parks Initiative
## Impacts of the Community Parks Initiative

The Community Parks Initiative will engage New Yorkers in transforming New York City’s parks and making it more equitable and vibrant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>65.5</th>
<th>55</th>
<th>35</th>
<th>24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>acres of urban parkland improved</td>
<td>neighborhoods impacted by capital projects, programming, partnership and maintenance efforts</td>
<td>capital projects provide improved parks amenities and access to approximately 220,000 New Yorkers who live within a 10-minute walk of these parks</td>
<td>Community Districts reached by the full Community Parks Initiative, with a total population of 3,270,000, where 36% live below the federal poverty line and 41% are under age 18</td>
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</table>
Create more equitable parks system to ensure fairness and access to ALL New Yorkers
Identifying Need & Making Equitable Investments in Parks

Los Angeles County
Regional Park and Open Space District

July 2019
Los Angeles County

Facts

- 4,000 square miles
- 10.3 million people
- 88 Cities
- 10 Local Park Agencies
- Two County Departments
- Regional Park and Open Space District
### Catalyst

**Elected Officials**
- Looking for a new source for funding parks
- Old local funding assessment was expiring
- Failed at the ballot in the first attempt in 2014

- Biggest criticism was that the Supervisors didn’t know what level of need for parks and funding existed
  - That they hadn’t gone to the communities or the park agencies to ask what was needed

- Funded the Countywide Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment
  - Inclusive of all communities and park agencies within the County
Regional Study

- This was the first time the County had looked at all existing parks and recreation facilities in cities and unincorporated communities throughout the County of LA.
- Utilized Census Tracks to create 188 Study Areas. Pop <150,000/study Area. Cities that are greater, multiple study areas.
- Technical Advisory & Steering Committees
Catalyst

Parks Data

• Created a portal, all agencies provided their inventory on all existing amenities

• Data mixed: GIS, Excel Sheets & new data entry

• Included an extensive community engagement resulting in lists of priority projects, complete with cost estimates.

• Built a constituency of support and understanding of park needs and opportunities.
Catalyst

Five Metrics

- Park Land (acres)
- Park Access
- Park Pressure
- Park Amenities
- Park Condition (amenities and infrastructure)
Countywide Park Land

- How many acres of park per 1,000 people?
- Individual Study Areas: Range 0-1,295 acres/1,000 people
- Countywide: 3.3 acres of local parks/1,000 people
- County General Plan adopted 4 acres of local parkland and 6 acres regional parkland.
- The cities vary in their adoption from none- 10 acres/1,000 people.
Catalyst

Park Access

- What percent of the population lives within ½ mile of a park?
- Calculated the walkable/pedestrian road areas
- Ensured barriers were taken into account (highways, flood control channels, etc.)
- 49% of the population live within ½ mile of a park they can walk to.
Catalyst

Park Pressure

- How much park land is available to residents in the area around each park?
- Park size in relation to population, quantifying the potential demand if each resident were to use the park closest to them
- Created a parkshed around each park. A polygon with the households nearest park.

Low park pressure at 20% of parks in the County

High park pressure at 80% of parks in the County
**Catalyst**

**Park Amenities**

- What amenities are available in each park in the Study Area?
- Each agency input into the data portal the quantity and type of amenity at each park.
- The number of each was calculated per 100,000 people for comparison countywide, State tope Cities average and National top Cities Average.
- There are 13 amenities with state and national data. There were no other data sets for fitness zones, gymnasiums or splash pads.

![Diagram of Park Amenities](image_url)
Catalyst

Park Condition

- Is the park in good, fair or poor condition?
- Each agency reported the condition of each amenity
- Each agency also reported the condition of the infrastructure of the park
- Restrooms, signage, parking lot, walkways, security lighting, park furniture, irrigation, vegetation/landscaping and fencing.
Catalyst

Park Need Framework

- Looked at need for parks within each Study Area, creating a map, that shows the variation of need across the study area.
- Four steps to calculate single level of need for each Study Area. Included:
  - Layering information about amenities, park access and population
  - Condition of the parks
  - Park access, if there were no parks the Study Area move up in need category
  - Population of each Study Area, those with higher population have inherently higher need for parks & amenities.
Results

- More than 50% of the County’s population lives in areas of high or very high park need.
- Study Areas in high park need have less than an acre per 1,000 people.
- Need to increase park land by 3,250 acres to provide the County average of 3.3 acres per 1,000 residents.
- There is a deep need in parts of the County for parks, refurbishing the current parks, parkland and park amenities.
Park Needs Assessment Website
https://lacountyparkneeds.org
At the same time, the Board directed the Regional Park and Open Space District to develop a local tax measure to meet the Park Need being identified.
Research

• What kind of assessment or taxes can the agency levy?
• What was done before and what can be done now
• How can that be put in place? Ballot, Board/Council vote?
• Would this be new, or an addition to a current assessment/tax?
• What funding source has successfully put funds into the high need/disadvantaged areas?

Team

• Agency, identify who has authority and will lead the team.
• Elected Officials (County & Cities)
• Attorney’s, both internal and external
• Consultants who know the how and what of this type of tax/assessment
• Other agencies or departments within your organization (auditor/controller, treasurer, tax collector, assessor, ….)
Catalyst

Measure A
- Special Tax a Parcel Tax, 1.5 cents/square foot of development. No expiration
- Exemption: those parcels owned by a public benefit corporation (non-profit) who owns the land for the same purpose of the corporation. (Churches, Schools, Parkland, ...) & publicly held land.
- RPOSD imposes the taxes, collects them to the Park fund only for Measure A purposes
- There are Maintenance Funds for each City and local park agency in the County

Funds to meet Need
- The Measure’s language is very specific, approved by 75% of the voters & is the law. It details how the funds go out- the Expenditure Plan
- There are two types of funds, Annual Allocation & Competitive Grant Funds
- The Measure calls out for reporting the metrics of meeting the language in Measure A
- Community Engagement is required of all projects that have Measure A funding.

Competitive Grant Funds
- Projects are broadly defined Park projects and allow for basic infrastructure improvements along with new amenities, acquisition and refurbishment
- These funds can be the matching funds, the first or the last funds into a project
- The criteria include points for being within a high or very High need Study Area or serving people from those areas.
- The Grant Programs are defined along with the percentage of funds
Annual Allocations

- To each Study Area, an annual allocation into their designated fund
- To each Study Area of high and very high need, an additional annual allocation into their designated fund
- Maintenance and Servicing Funds to all cities and park agencies, annual allocation into their designated fund
- Technical Assistance for Study Areas of high and very high need.

Study Area Funds

- Go back to each Study Area utilizing a formula that weights the population and the square footage of the Study Area
- Those with higher population and higher square footage get more funds, every year, in perpetuity.
- Funds to high and very high need Study Areas get an additional allocation, every year

Technical Assistance

- Already doing ‘standard’ technical assistance for all who are grantees or potential grantees: workshops, staff time and dialogue about projects and applications, guide books, webinars. Other resources on website
- Developing the Urban TAP: To provide resources to develop projects, the community’s awareness of engaging with government, parks, park funding, improved parks, improved communities.
Spend the Money
- The first year of the tax revenue was 2017/2018
- Agencies of Record are putting forth their plans to expend funds, now
- Maintenance Funds have been the first expenditures

Track the Expenditures
- Metrics that are to be posted to the website and available to be utilized by others is written in the measure
- Annual Report- fiscally oriented
- Develop and track the metrics, report them

Study Updates
- Do the second study that looks at Trail Connectors, Open Space, Wildlife Corridors, Rural Areas
- Update the 2016 Needs Assessment in 2022, funded by Measure A
- Update joint study after new census figures are out every 10 years (2032, 2042, 2052...
Measure A Funding Schedule:

- **Annual Allocation Grant Program:**
  - Available Now
  - Funds replenished every fall
  - Can only apply for available funds
  - Rolling applications – no deadline to apply

- **Competitive Grant Funding Programs:**
  - Availability TBD

- **Other Funding Programs**
  - **Maintenance and Servicing:** Available Now
  - **Technical Assistance:** some resources available now, others are currently being developed
Thank You

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Los Angeles County
Regional Park and Open Space District

Email: info@rposd.lacounty.gov
Phone: 626.588.5060
Website: RPOSD.LACounty.gov
GARE Intro to Racial Equity

Race: Power of Illusion

Documentary

Racial Equity Training

Implicit Bias Training

Equity Training from Two National Experts in Equity

Harassment Prevention

• 98% of supervisors
• 79% of leads
• 83% of captains

Harassment Prevention / Gender Inclusion Training

Park Maintenance

Structural Maintenance

Internal - Training
Internal - HR

- Labor Market vs Staff Demographic Analysis
- Training for entry level staff - How to take Civil Service tests, Walkouts, and RPD-U Conference
- All new RPD-U division and portal to offer opportunity to all staff
- DICE – Diversity and Inclusion Committee on Equity
  - De-identified job applications with name, address, and college names redacted
Internal – Asset Maintenance
Capital and Bond Planning

INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE GROWTH, EQUITY, CONDITION

High Needs

Condition Assessment

Equity Zones Growth

Update underway

Density

Multi-use Sites/Community Hubs

Seismic Safety

EQUITY ZONES

GROWTH
Sensitive Population
1. Asthma
2. Cardiovascular Disease
3. Low Birth Weight
4. Age (youth and seniors)
5. Non-White

Socioeconomic Factors
6. Linguistic Isolation
7. Poverty
8. Unemployment
9. Educational Attainment
10. Housing Burden

External: Measuring Equity
What We Measure

- PARK ACCESS
- PROGRAMS
- VOLUNTEERS
- KIDS & NATURE
- MAINTENANCE
- INVESTMENT
## What We Measure

### PARK ACCESS
- **41%** of city parks reside in Equity Zones

### VOLUNTEERS
- **32%** of volunteer hours happen in Equity Zones

### MAINTENANCE
- **88.2%** Average park score in Equity Zones

### PROGRAMS
- **39%** of rec resources are provided in Equity Zones

### KIDS & NATURE
- **24%** of registrants in outdoor programs live in EZs

### INVESTMENT
- **61%** of capital dollars are going to EZ parks
Equity-based Programs

Facilities
Gender
Race
Justice
Inclusion
Geographic
Language
Housing Status
Nature Connection

WHATEVER
just wash your hands.
Equity-based Projects

Transforming San Francisco's Southeastern Waterfront

India Basin Shoreline Park
India Basin Restoration Equitable Park Development Plan

- Jobs and Workforce Training
- Housing-to-Park: Connected Community Access
- Environmental Justice
- Preserving Place: History, Art and Culture
- Human Rights Commission

San Francisco
Office of Economic and Workforce Development

Now Hiring
S P E A K E R   C O N T A C T

Mitchell Silver, NYC Parks, mitchell.silver@parks.nyc.gov
Jane Beesley, Los Angeles Regional Park and Open Space District, jbeesley@rposd.lacounty.gov
Phil Ginsburg, San Francisco Recreation and Park Department, phil.ginsburg.@sfgov.org
MEMBERSHIP

Your connection to information and expertise on new urban park models, practices, and innovative partnerships.

Members have access to a suite of highly-curated resources specifically designed for the parks community including:

• Webinars
• Online resource library
• Urban park study tours
• Advocacy tools
• Discounted registration to Greater & Greener

Join City Parks Alliance today! To learn more, visit our membership table in the exhibition hall or go to cityparksalliance.org/membership.

#greatergreener