



Park Equity Communities of Practice

Maintenance Policies and Funding Track

Overview of Session 1 – Standards and Assessments

October 25, 2023

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Session Overview: Standards & Assessments

The **Park Equity Communities of Practice** is a capacity building and peer learning network that brings together cities throughout the U.S. to focus on improving park equity. Through a co-creation and rigorous approach, we work to generate policy recommendations, resources, and guidance that supports changing park equity practices on the ground.

The **Maintenance Policies and Funding** track elevates maintenance as an essential driver of building an equitable park system. Participants will investigate key strategies to improve maintenance systems for parks, including policies, funding, assessments, and other approaches to capacity-building.

During the kick-off session in October 2023, participants reviewed:

- National trends in park maintenance
- Practices for developing maintenance standards
- Practices for assessing maintenance
- The intersections between maintenance and climate mitigation

Participants heard from the [Houston Parks Board](#) on their unique approaches to these core ideas.

What We Heard: Equitable Maintenance Standards

Park equity is not just about access – it's also about the quality and care of parks. Cities face complex decisions around how to equitably allocate resources towards maintenance in their park systems.

- **Strategies from the cohort to equitably prioritize service maintenance schedules, given the variability of parks needs:**
 - Balance creating standardization vs. unique and creative adjustments to maintain assets.
 - Determine standards for staffing and activities (i.e. anticipated time spent per specific task).
 - Encourage staff participation in maintenance assessments or inventories. Barriers may include lack of training, capacity, and using technology/software.
 - Identify preventative standards and proactive audits to improve maintenance systems.
- **Challenges:**
 - Addressing maintenance backlogs for older parks while keeping up with new parks and facilities (especially in rapidly-growing cities).
 - Lack of available park visitation data and/or asset conditions data to demonstrate increased activity in parks.

In Aurora, CO, the City leverages its existing system to survey to evaluate efforts and reallocate funds based on the balance of maintenance needs in each category.

What We Heard: Equitable Maintenance Standards

City agencies can't achieve park equity alone. Community involvement in all facets of work – including maintenance – is essential for ensuring that local needs are met.

- **Strategies to better involve the community to improve parks maintenance:**
 - Communicate project life cycles and planning for continued touch points to build trust and relationships.
 - Account for community stewardship resources into maintenance approach (i.e. prioritizing service between parks with friends of groups and stewardship and those with none).

*The nonprofit Hospitality Hub works closely with the unhoused population in **Memphis TN**, to support an inclusive policy in which all park users are treated equally. This includes training urban park rangers (not police officers) and helping to identify long-term housing for multiple park users.*

What We Heard: Mitigating Climate Change

Parks are essential climate infrastructure. Therefore, the strategies park agencies use to maintain their public spaces can and should be leveraged to support climate change mitigation efforts.

- **Strategies to embed climate change mitigation into park maintenance practices:**
 - Adjust hours for maintenance based on season (i.e. early morning/evening when there are cooler temperatures during hot weather).
 - Seek creative solutions and adapt approaches to daily maintenance to address climate change.
 - Incorporate climate resilience into department's long-range planning documents and align with city's sustainability and climate goals.
 - Foster collaboration with emergency response departments on 1) operations and protocols, 2) infrastructure needs, 3) staff training.
 - Adjust natural habitats to support native species given changing climate conditions.
 - Address water conservation and scarcity, while also increasing proactive stormwater management planning and infrastructural solutions.

In Albuquerque, NM, maintenance staff added 1 hour/day of sprinkler playtime for children for heat mitigation.

Atlanta Parks and Recreation is currently working with Savannah College of Design to redesign their department's outdoor uniforms to be more suitable for heat (stillsuit model).

Seattle, WA, is looking for ways to decarbonize parks facilities and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Resources

10-Minute Walk Communities of Practice

Find session recordings, presentations, and resources for each track.

The Power of Parks to Address Climate Change

As part of its 2022 ParkScore® index, Trust for Public Land (TPL) asked parks departments in the 100 most populous cities what they're doing about climate change. Learn more about how city agencies, neighborhood associations, climate-justice groups, arts organizations, and environmental activists have all pushed cities to move aggressively on climate measures.

The 2023 NRPA Agency Performance Review Report

Review key findings from park and recreation agencies across the United States on varying topics — from facility type to policies – to guide effective management and planning of operating resources and capital facilities.

Closing The Gap: Public And Private Funding Strategies For Neighborhood Parks

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and City Parks Alliance researched innovative techniques and strategies to address funding gaps for capital and maintenance of neighborhood park systems. This report is a culmination of that work and is based on an extensive literature review and interviews with park professionals from eleven urban park systems.

Managing High-Quality Park Environments

This report, led by Imagine LaSalle, a community-driven initiative to explore the future of the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park, examines the management features of 21 precedent parks with the ultimate goal of identifying lessons for managing and maintaining a new high-quality park to meet the community's vision.