



Central Valley Communities of Practice: Parks as a Driver to Improve Public Health

May 20, 2026

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

Welcome!

Today's Agenda:

- Welcome & Introductions
- Presentation
- Ask me Anything Expert Panels
- Report Back to the Group
- Next Steps & Exit Survey

GIVEAWAY! Win a prize at each session or the grand prize at the end of the series!



Partner Team



Trust for Public Land

National nonprofit with the mission of protecting land and creating parks for people to ensure healthy, livable communities for generations to come.



PlaceWorks

Planning and Design firm that thrives on working with communities to tackle complex problems and develop workable solutions, with extensive experience in Stockton.



WRT

WRT is rooted in ecology, social equity, and community-based planning, with a parks and open space practice that works across scales. WRT works extensively in Fresno.



MIG

Multidisciplinary firm specializing in participatory planning, design, and policy, with extensive experience in Bakersfield.

Icebreaker Activity

Introduce yourself in the chat:

- What is your name?
- What is your organization?
- What is a key public health concern in your community or the Central Valley?



Session 3 Parks as a Climate Solution



What we heard

- Climate change, equity, and park access are closely connected
- Extreme heat and limited shade reduce park use
- Need for more trees, shade structures, water fountains, restrooms, and well-maintained park infrastructure
- Interest in partnerships with healthcare providers to support funding for park equipment and recreation amenities
- Some communities lack awareness of available parks and open spaces
- Community programs and public agency funding can support environmental justice goals
- Interest in using native, low-allergen plants and nature-based design to make parks more welcoming and comfortable

Central Valley Funding Summits

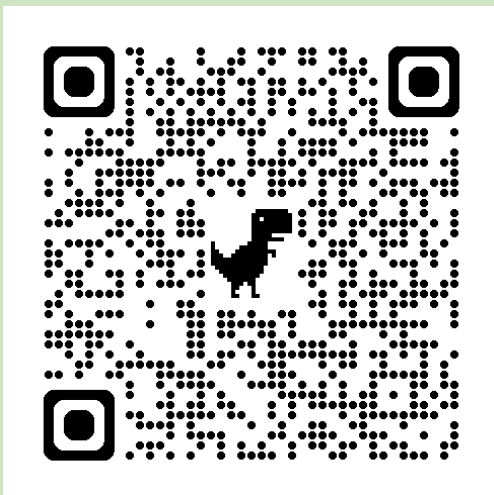
- Tell a compelling story that highlights the end users when writing grant applications – funders want to see the People Magazine article, not a Wikipedia page.
- Start building relationships now to find the right allies (in leadership and community).
- Sign up for listservs and reach out to state agency staff – they want to work with you!



Resources from the summits will be posted online at www.CentralValleyParkStrategy.com/FundingSummits

Collaborative Resource List

Everyone can contribute!



- Participant sharing hub for resources.
- Share your contact information with your peers.
- Learn and share about resources.



Today's Objectives

Parks as a Driver for Public Health

- Learn about Stockton's Community Health Improvement Plan.
- Explore how rivers, water access, and youth recreation support community health.
- Understand how safe park access supports public health, physical activity, and mental health.



Trust for Public Land Communities of Practice San Joaquin Parks Partnerships

Tammy Shaff

Community Health Director
St. Joseph's Medical Center



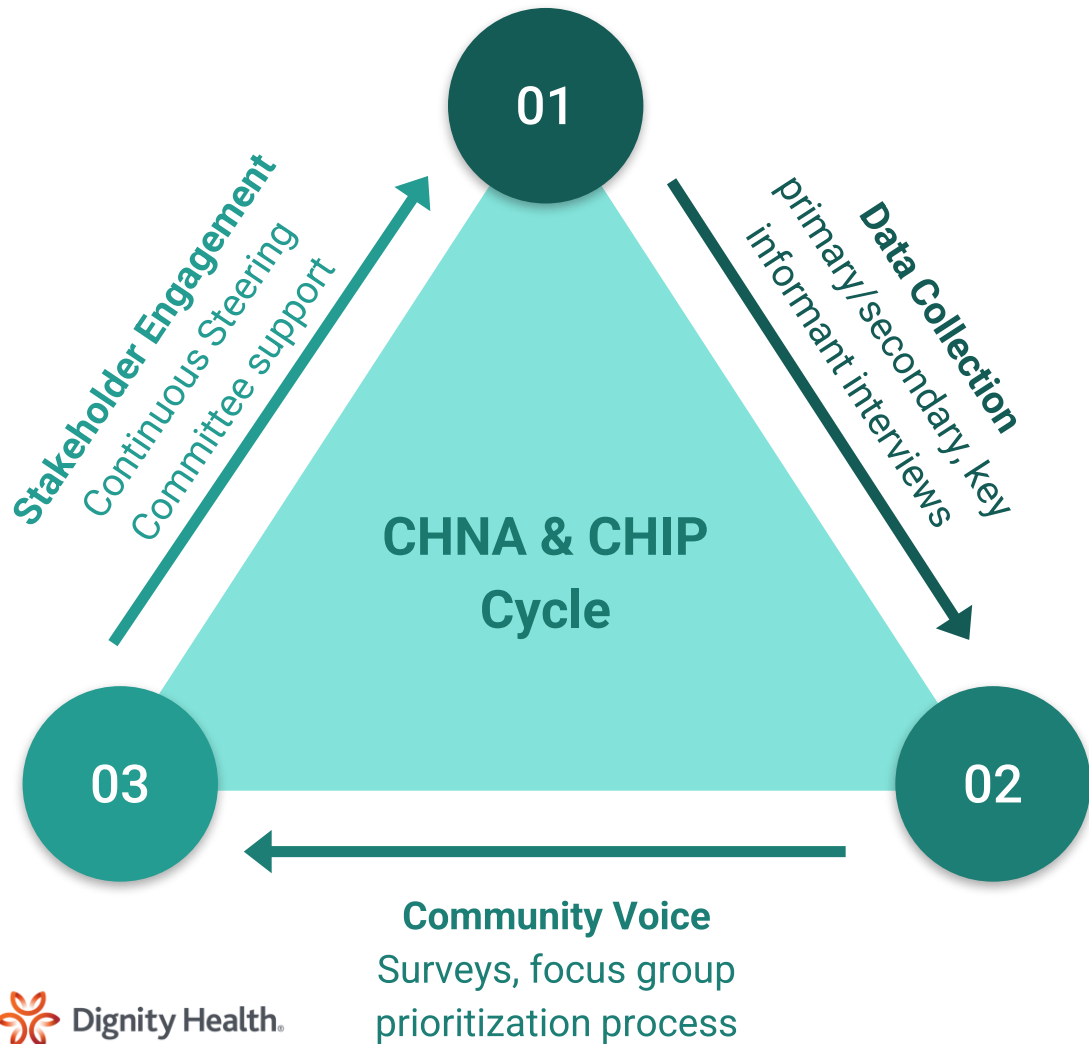
Presentation Overview

- San Joaquin County Demographics
- Review of Collaborative CHNA/CHIP Process
- Park Benefits and Investment Impact

Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) & Community Health Implementation Plan (CHIP) Process

- **Community Benefits Requirement** - Not for profit hospitals must conduct CHNA every 3 years
- **Accreditation** - Public Health must routinely conduct a CHNA and CHIP to maintain national accreditation status
- **Medi-Cal requirement** - Managed Care Plans (MCPs) must now demonstrate meaningful participation in CHNA and CHIP

CHNA & CHIP Collaboration



Identified CHNA Needs & CHIP Priorities

2019

Figure 1: CHNA Health Needs

Highest Priority

- Mental Health
- Economic Security
- Obesity/Healthy Eating, Active Living/Diabetes

Medium Priority

- Violence/Injury Prevention
- Access to Care
- Substance Abuse/Tobacco

Lower Priority

- Asthma
- Oral Health
- Climate and Health

VS.

2022

CHNA Health Needs

Highest Priority

- Mental Health
- Access to Care
- Income and Employment

Medium Priority

- Housing
- Chronic Disease/HEAL
- Community Safety

Lower Priority

- Family and Social Support
- Education
- Transportation

The Need for Green Spaces...

Improved Mental Health & Chronic Disease Management

- Parks and green spaces can help individuals fight against mental health issues like depression, anxiety and stress.
- Several studies have confirmed that separation from nature is detrimental to human development, health and wellbeing, and that regular contact with nature is required for good mental health.
- 30 minutes of walking in nature results in larger drops in blood glucose than three hours of cycling indoors.

Increased Socialization, Physical Activity & Community Safety

- Neighborhood parks have the potential to function as a nucleus of neighborhood activity, where residents can gather for social events, recreational activities, and meetings about community issues, increasing social interaction.
- Active spaces deter illicit behaviors like vandalism and drug trafficking.

The need for green spaces, in Stockton...

Table 6: San Joaquin County Priority Neighborhoods (Census Tracts)

Census Tract	City	Included in 2022 CHNA
1.01 and 1.02	Stockton	✓ (as CT1)
3	Stockton	✓
6	Stockton	✓
7	Stockton	✓
16	Stockton	✓
22.01	Stockton	✓
27.01	Stockton (Garden Acres)	✓
33.12	Stockton	✓
38.03	French Camp	✓
40.01	Thornton	✓
44.03	Lodi	✓
47.01	Lockeford	✓
51.09	Manteca	✓
53.03	Tracy	✓

Ranked #80 out of 100 Nationally



- Stockton scored the lowest in 2 categories: **park acres**, and **park investment**.
- Park spending amounts to **\$19 per person**, compared to national average of \$94 per person.
- Park acreage is **3% of the city area**, compared to the national average of 19%.

Small investment, high yields



Williams Brotherhood Park, Stockton

Initial Public/Private CHIP Investment from Dignity Health & Kaiser (\$25k each) to repair fire damaged playground

Dignity Health Community Health Improvement Grants

(2022 - 2024)



- **\$692K Outdoor Equity:** City of Stockton
- **\$300K Build Health:** Reinvent South Stockton & SJC Public Health
- **\$2.5M Delta Aquatics Center (DAC):** Delta Conservatory
- **\$700k Waterway Connection:** City of Stockton, DAC
- **\$2.5 M Stockton Roots:** Josh Harder Appropriation
- **\$2.5 M Urban Forestry:** Little Manila Rising

- Beautified parks
- Community gardens
- Green schoolyards
- Reduced neighborhood blight
- Safe walking trails
- Waterway restoration
- Accessible parks
- Community engagement
- New recreation amenities



2025

CHNA Health Needs

Highest Priority

- Access to Care
- Mental/Behavioral Health
- Chronic Disease/HEAL

Medium Priority

- Housing
- Economics
- Social Support

Lower Priority

- Community Safety
- Education
- Food Security
- Transportation

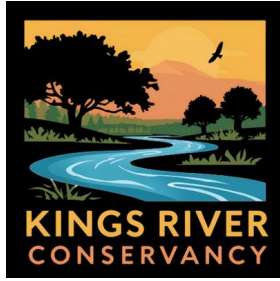
For more information visit:
HealthierSanJoaquin.org

 www.kingsriverconservancy.org

PARKS & HEALTH

Molly Schnur-Salimbene, Executive Director





PARKS & HEALTH

MAKING THE CONNECTION

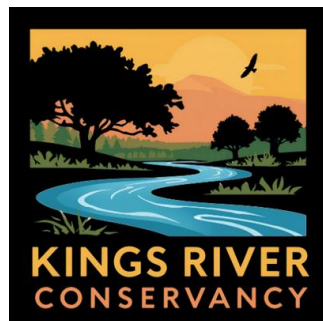
AIR QUALITY

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

SOCIAL COHESION

STRESS REDUCTION





PARKS & HEALTH



MENTAL HEALTH & PARKS



Interaction with nature, either direct (immersion) or indirect (proximity) is associated with:

- Improved cognitive function
- Restored adaptive function / attention
- Stress reduction
- Improved emotional well being
- Psychosocial / socioemotional development



PARKS & HEALTH

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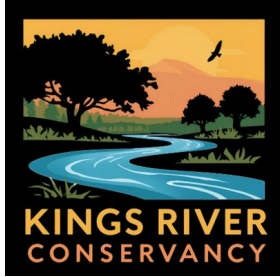
YOUTH & PARKS



Research has shown additional benefits of time in nature for youth:

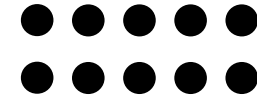
- Increased self esteem
- Reduced screen time
- Increase in overall happiness
- Improved academic performance
- Increased connection to nature & future stewardship





PARKS & HEALTH

WATER & RIVERS

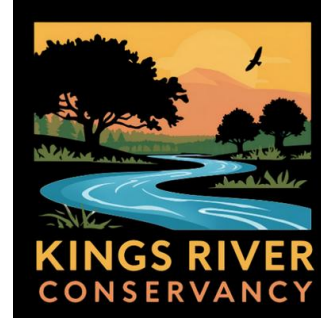
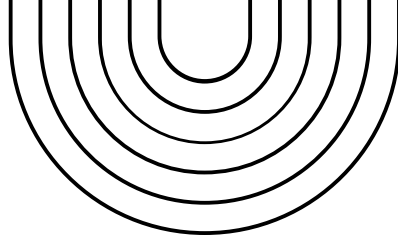


Zhang X, Zhang Y, Zhai J, Wu Y, Mao A. Waterscapes for Promoting Mental Health in the General Population. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 2021; 18(22):11792.

Rivers, lakes, streams, coastlines and associated riparian habitats may have additional benefits:

- Instinctively more attractive than other green spaces
- Increased noise reduction leads to larger emotional release
- Higher potential for active or passive interactivity
- Cooler temperatures, more active breezes
- Providing natural biodiversity and wildlife viewing





...S & HEALTH

I titled this photo 'Calming Serenity' because it's the only way that can encompass what you feel when looking at the river. Despite the river flowing so quickly, it is able to calm your racing inner thoughts down: a beautiful juxtaposition that reflects how it feels to be out in nature.



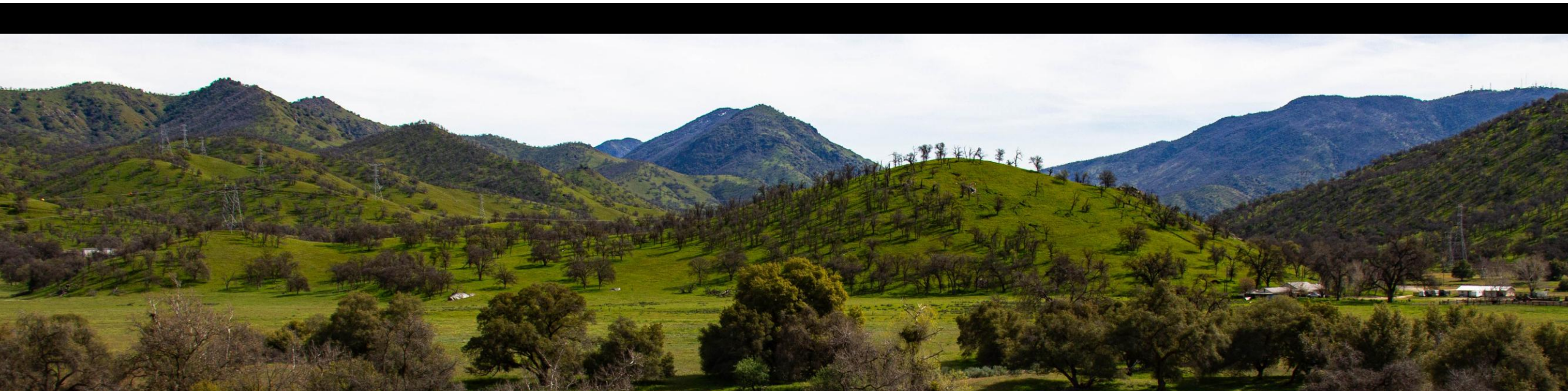
KS & HEALTH



Niko L.,

Community College Category Photo Contest Winner

It is important to get outdoors and connect with nature. You get to expand the world around you and meet people who are as passionate and friendly! So it's important to get out there, spend time outdoors, meet new people by exploring, volunteering, or photographing.





PARKS & HEALTH

FACTORS IN PARK USAGE

“I have a park right across from my house, and I wouldn't go over there if you paid me.”

“We want to go to parks that are interesting. The closest park, we can walk to, but it does not interest my kids.”

“I mean, just a nice park. You don't need more, you just need nice. Just fix it up”



01. Park Features

02. Condition of Park

03. Accessibility

04. Perception of Safety

05. Aesthetics



PARKS & HEALTH



CLIMATE CHANGE



Climate change impacts on human health to consider in parks and open space planning:

- **Higher overall temperatures & heatwaves**
- **Drought & water scarcity**
- **Wildfires**
- **Flooding events**
- **Direct threats to physical safety / mortality**



 www.kingsriverconservancy.org

THANK YOU!

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TRUST FOR
PUBLIC
LAND®

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

Nature for Health & Wellbeing

Pooja S. Tandon, MD, MPH
Health Director, TPL
Professor of Pediatrics, University of Washington



Access to the outdoors is a fundamental human need and essential to our health and well-being.



OUR WORK ON THE GROUND



Our parks and monuments tell the story of our past and present, but they're at risk. When we preserve them, we enshrine the full history that defines our nation and connects us to one another.



As the most prolific trail organization in the country in terms of miles created and protected, we establish carbon-free transportation networks that connect people to nature, recreation, schools, workplaces, and each other.



Did you know that 100 million people in this country lack a quality park close to home? To eliminate that gap, we listen to community members and leverage our relationships and expertise to help them create parks that serve and connect people to nature and each other.



Community schoolyards are symbols of community empowerment. Our model allows students, parents, teachers, and residents to design these powerful resources that improve health and education outcomes and increase climate resilience.



TPL's Health Commitment

We know that health is too often determined by zip code.

Where people live can have a greater impact on health outcomes than medical care, and close-to-home parks are one of the location-based opportunities to improve health by offering opportunities for physical activity, better mental health, reducing stress and social isolation, and more.

Park inequity nationwide

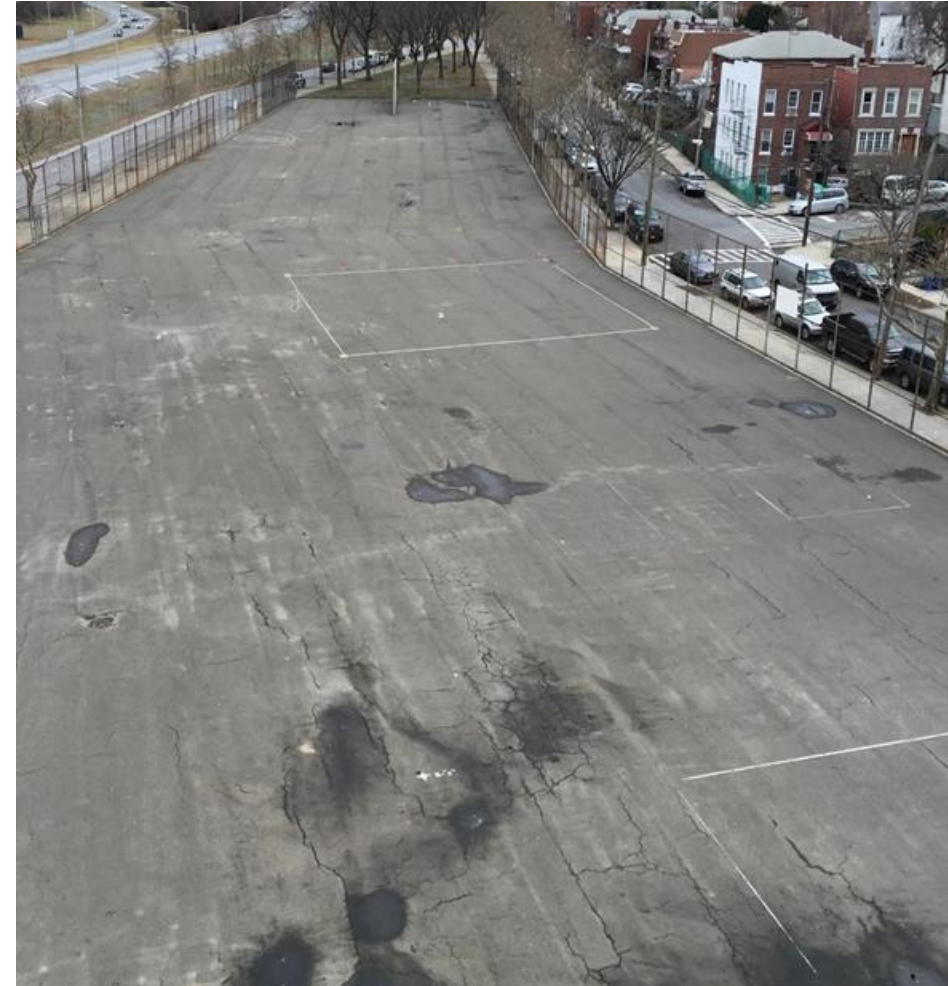
1/3 of people in the U.S. have no park within a 10-minute walk (0.5 mile) of home

28 million of them are children

Access is marked by socioeconomic and racial disparities due to systemic injustices.

Parks in neighborhoods that serve majority non-white & lower income households tend to be:

- Smaller
- More crowded
- Lower quality
- Less safe
- Fewer amenities





Central Valley Health Snapshot

Source: CHCF; California Healthline

- Among the poorest regions in California despite high agricultural output
- 1 in 13 adults has diabetes (vs. ~1 in 17 statewide)
- Up to 70% of adults overweight or obese in some counties
- Higher rates of heart disease, cancer mortality, and infant mortality



Children Face Disproportionate Risks

Source: Valley Children's Healthcare; CVHPI; California Healthline

- Childhood obesity up to ~27% in some counties
- Asthma rates among highest in CA (e.g., Fresno ~17%)
- Food insecurity affects ~1 in 5 families



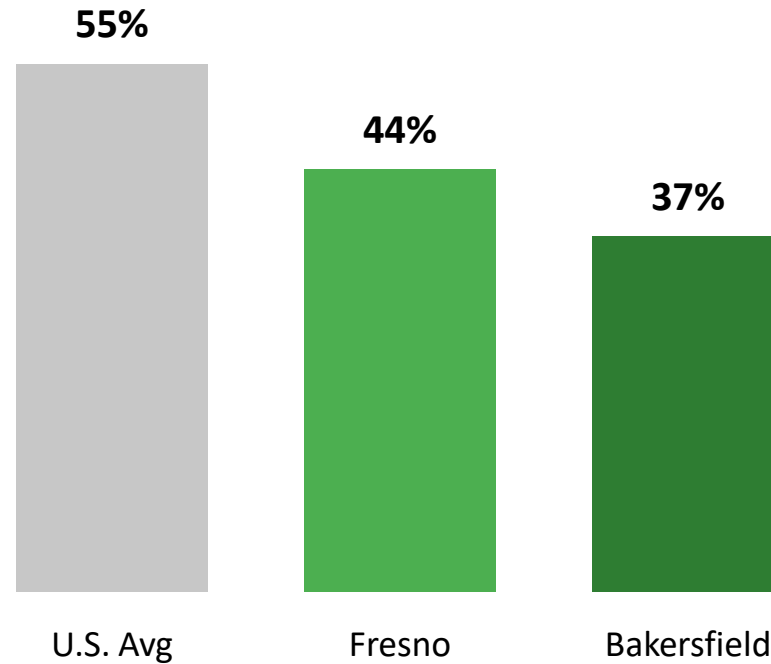
Health Is Shaped by Place

Source: CHCF; CVHPI; California Healthline

- 1 in 6 residents uninsured
- 30% fewer physicians per capita than CA average
- High exposure to air pollution and extreme heat
- Limited access to safe places for physical activity

Access to Parks: Central Valley vs. U.S.

Percent within a 10-minute walk of a park



Source: Trust for Public Land ParkScore (2024)

Communities with the greatest health needs often have the least access to nearby parks.

Parks and greenspace: Pathways to health



Nature contact



Physical activity



Social connections



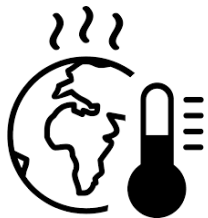
Happiness



Safety



Noise reduction



Climate resilience



Air quality

Nature contact: Physical health



LOWER BLOOD
PRESSURE



SMOOTHER
POST-OP
RECOVERY



BETTER BIRTH
OUTCOMES



IMPROVED PAIN
CONTROL



HEALTHIER
WEIGHT



REDUCED
DIABETES



BETTER
EYESIGHT



+/- ASTHMA &
ALLERGY EFFECTS

Nature contact: Mental and behavioral health



REDUCED
STRESS



REDUCED
DEPRESSION AND
ANXIETY



IMPROVED ADHD
SYMPTOMS



PROSOCIAL
BEHAVIOR



REDUCED
AGGRESSION

Nature contact: Overall health and well-being



IMPROVED
SLEEP



IMPROVED
HEALTH IN
CANCER
PATIENTS



BETTER
GENERAL
HEALTH



HEALTHIER CHILD
DEVELOPMENT



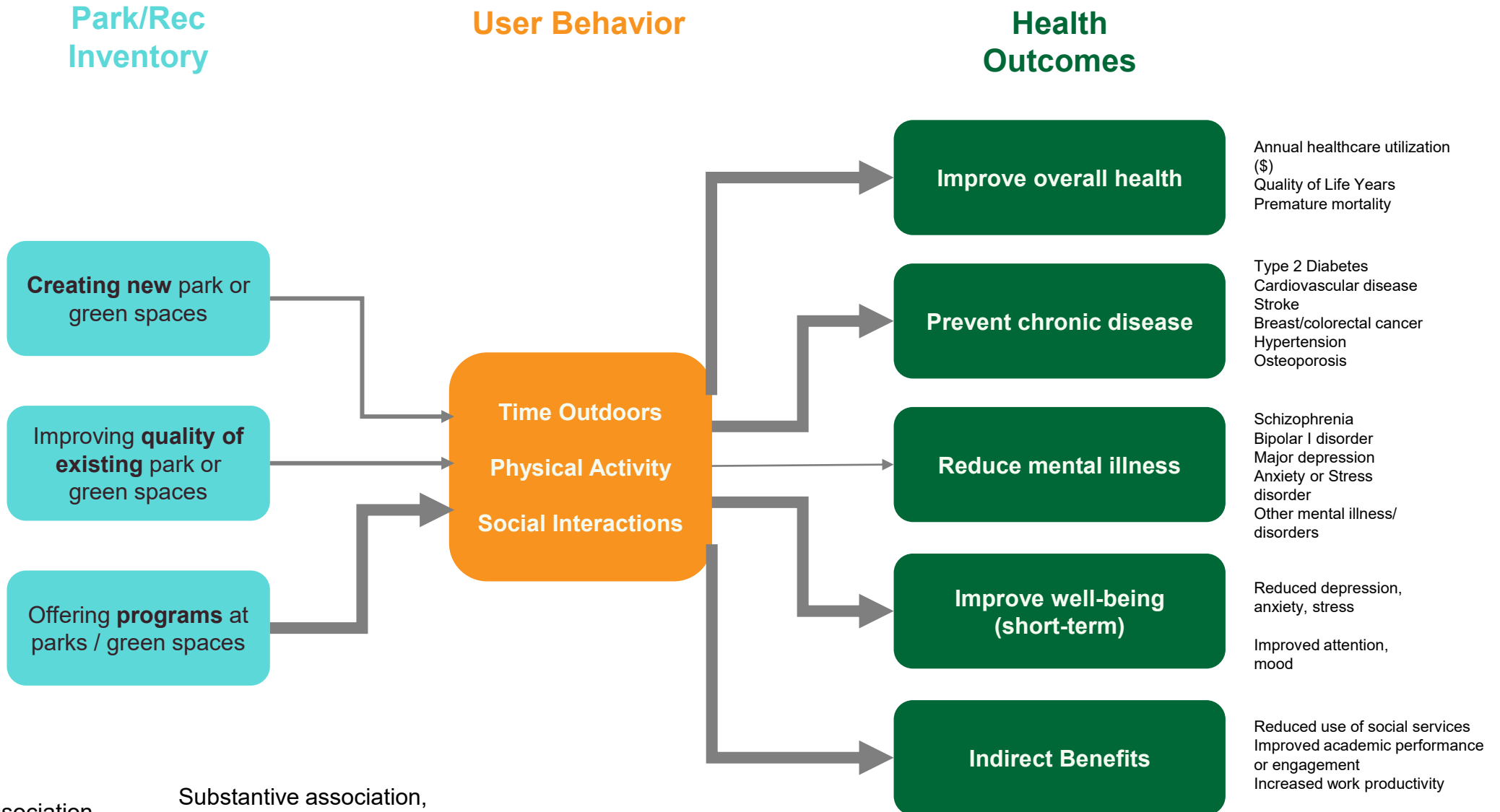
LONGER LIFE
EXPECTANCY



GREATER
HAPPINESS

PARK PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

Health LOGIC MODEL



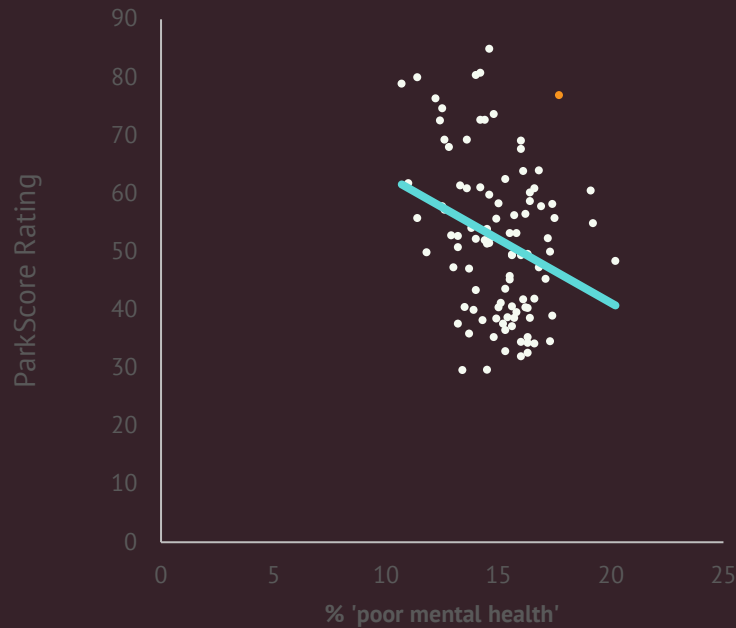
Substantive association

Substantive association, with contingencies

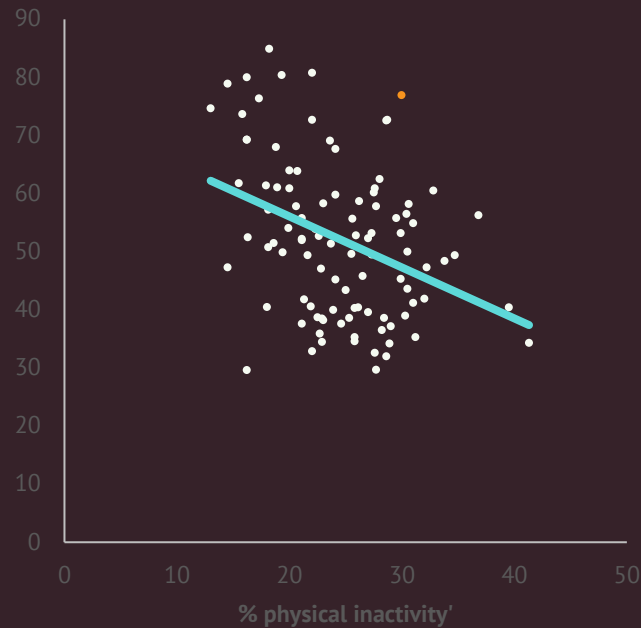
Limited association



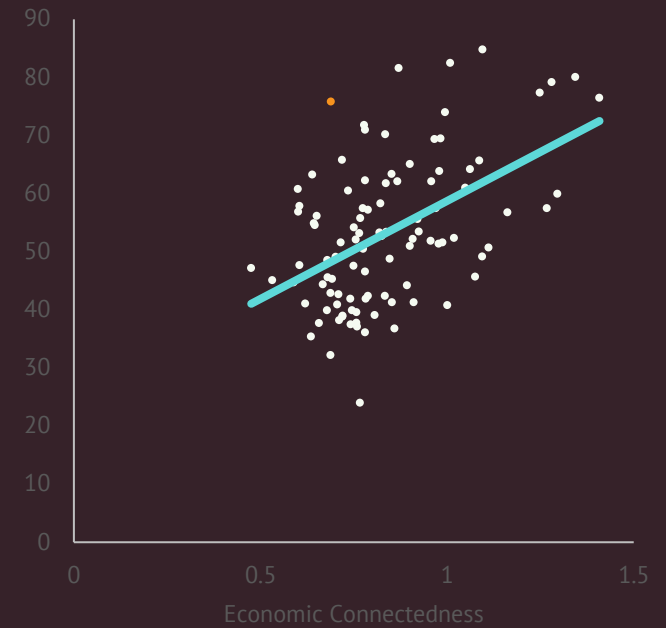
Residents living in cities with **TOP RANKED PARK SYSTEMS ARE**



9% less
likely to suffer from
poor mental health



21% less
likely to be
physically inactive



26% more
likely to be
socially connected



Photo: Christopher T. Martin

Health Funding for Parks and Greenspace

An Innovative Community Health Strategy

Parks and greenspaces are highly effective in promoting physical, mental, and social health. Yet park departments often struggle to secure sufficient funding to create, maintain, and program these spaces, especially in communities with the greatest needs. At the same time, nonprofit hospitals are required to invest in community health but typically do not consider parks and greenspaces as part of these efforts. This work highlights a promising opportunity hiding in plain sight: hospitals can use community benefit funds to invest in parks and greenspaces—proven, evidence-based strategies to improve health and advance equity. Drawing on examples from across the U.S., our findings show that this approach is feasible and offers hospitals a new way to invest upstream in health, while providing park agencies and advocates an innovative source of funding.

Health Funding for Parks and Greenspace: An Innovative Community Investment Strategy — Bryce Puesta Takenaka, Hareen Seerha, Howard Frumkin, Pooja Sarin Tandon (2025) <https://t4pl.org/4gMvc53>

Study Purpose

We conducted a study to examine how parks and greenspaces are currently addressed in hospital Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNAs) and to explore opportunities for hospitals, park agencies, and community organizations to collaborate in advancing community health and health equity through parks.

Methods

We reviewed CHNAs from 51 large nonprofit hospitals located in U.S. cities ranking in the lower half of the 2024 Trust for Public Land ParkScore® Index. We analyzed whether and how parks and greenspaces were included in assessing community health. To complement this analysis, we conducted interviews and focus groups with 29 representatives from hospitals, park agencies, and community organizations to understand perceived benefits, barriers, and opportunities for cross-sector collaboration.

Health Dollars for Parks and Greenspace

Health Funding for Parks and Greenspace: An Innovative Community Investment Strategy — Bryce Puesta Takenaka, Hareen Seerha, Howard Frumkin, Pooja Sarin Tandon (2025)

Health Dollars for Parks and Greenspace

- Parks are widely recognized as valuable for health.
- Parks are inconsistently addressed in CHNAs.
- Limited attention reflects capacity constraints, not opposition.
- Examples of successful collaboration exist.
 - Several cities demonstrated promising cross-sector collaborations such as community gardens, green schoolyards, youth sports complexes, and health programs in parks.
 - Even modest improvements such as lighting, benches, tree canopy expansion, trail connections, and community programming can produce meaningful health benefits.
- The study offers practical strategies for hospitals, park agencies, and community groups to partner more effectively, integrate park data into CHNAs, and direct health dollars toward advancing park equity and health equity.

Recommendations

Shifting Healthcare towards Prevention

- Partner across health, parks, and community sectors to address inequities
- Use inclusive CHNAs to guide equitable health and park investments
- Align CHNAs with park agencies and community priorities
- Leverage CHNAs to integrate surveys, GIS, and community input
- Prioritize park access and activation in community health investments
- Share park-health lessons across hospitals and community partners
- Use CHNAs to fundraise, advocate, and expand park-health programs
- Expand research on health impacts of park and greenspace funding



Happiest

Outside!

THANK YOU!

PoojaTandon@tpl.org

Zoom Poll!

Do you need Spanish interpretation?

- Yes/Sí
- No/No



Zoom Poll!

Select the Ask Me Anything Expert Panel you are most interested in joining for the small group discussion

- **Stockton Community Health Improvement Plan**
Expert: Tammy Shaff
- **Kings River Conservancy**
Expert: Molly Schnur-Salimbene
- **General Public Health**
Expert: Pooja Tandon

Multilingual room with English/Spanish interpretation





Ask Me Anything Expert Panels

Small Group Discussions

- The facilitator will introduce the topic expert and support group introductions
- Participants may ask questions and share reflections related to the topic
- Each group will identify a spokesperson to share a brief 1-minute recap when everyone returns to the main room

Report Back to the Group



Join our Upcoming Final Session! – Wednesday at 12

- **July 22** - Community Engagement in Action



Session Survey

Take our survey to join the giveaway!

Scan the QR code or click the link in the chat.





Thank you!

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

Since 1972, TPL has protected 4 million acres of public land; created 5,364 parks, trails, schoolyards, and iconic outdoor places; raised \$93 billion in public funding for parks and public lands; and connected nearly 9.4 million people to the outdoors.

To learn more, visit tpl.org.