



Tools for Evaluating Park Equity and Access in Pennsylvania

January 22, 2026

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

Welcome!

Please introduce yourself in the chat with:

- Your name
- Your city, county, or town
- Your organization
- What are you curious about?



Agenda

- Program Overview & Goals: *Advancing Recreation-Oriented Conservation in PA*
- Our Work in Pennsylvania
- Mapping Access & Equity in PA
- Putting the Data to Work: Bethlehem Case Study
- Q&A
- Next Steps



Trust for Public Land is a national nonprofit, working to create parks and protect land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

**We believe in
OUTSIDE FOR ALL**



Community is at the center of all we do.

Communities that place a high value on outdoor access for all are



HEALTHIER



MORE RESILIENT



MORE EQUITABLE

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Community Conservation Partnership Program

Phase 1:

- Mapping & Prioritization
- ORLP Support

Phase 2:

- Community Technical Assistance
- ORLP Support



Advancing Recreation-Oriented Conservation in PA

5-session, quarterly, virtual workshop series designed to provide municipalities, land managers, and advocates with the **strategies, skills, and resources** needed to support outdoor access for all across the Commonwealth.

Session Dates:

- Jan. 22: Tools for Evaluating Park Equity & Access in PA
- Apr. 23: Open Space as a Catalyst for Community Impact
- Jul. 23: Strategies for Community-Led Conservation
- Oct. 22: Outdoor Recreation as a Pathway to Economic Vitality
- Jan. 21: Funding Recreation-Oriented Conservation in PA



Our Goals

By the end of this series, participants will...

1. Understand the **strategies, funding opportunities, and practices** that ensure all communities have equal access to open space and outdoor recreation.
2. Make the case for outdoor recreation as a tool to **boost economic vitality, improve quality of life, support public health, and protect community resilience.**
3. Recognize the **role of community and other stakeholders** in bringing this vision to life.
4. Identify **actionable next steps, tools, and technical support** to leverage open space to advance local goals.



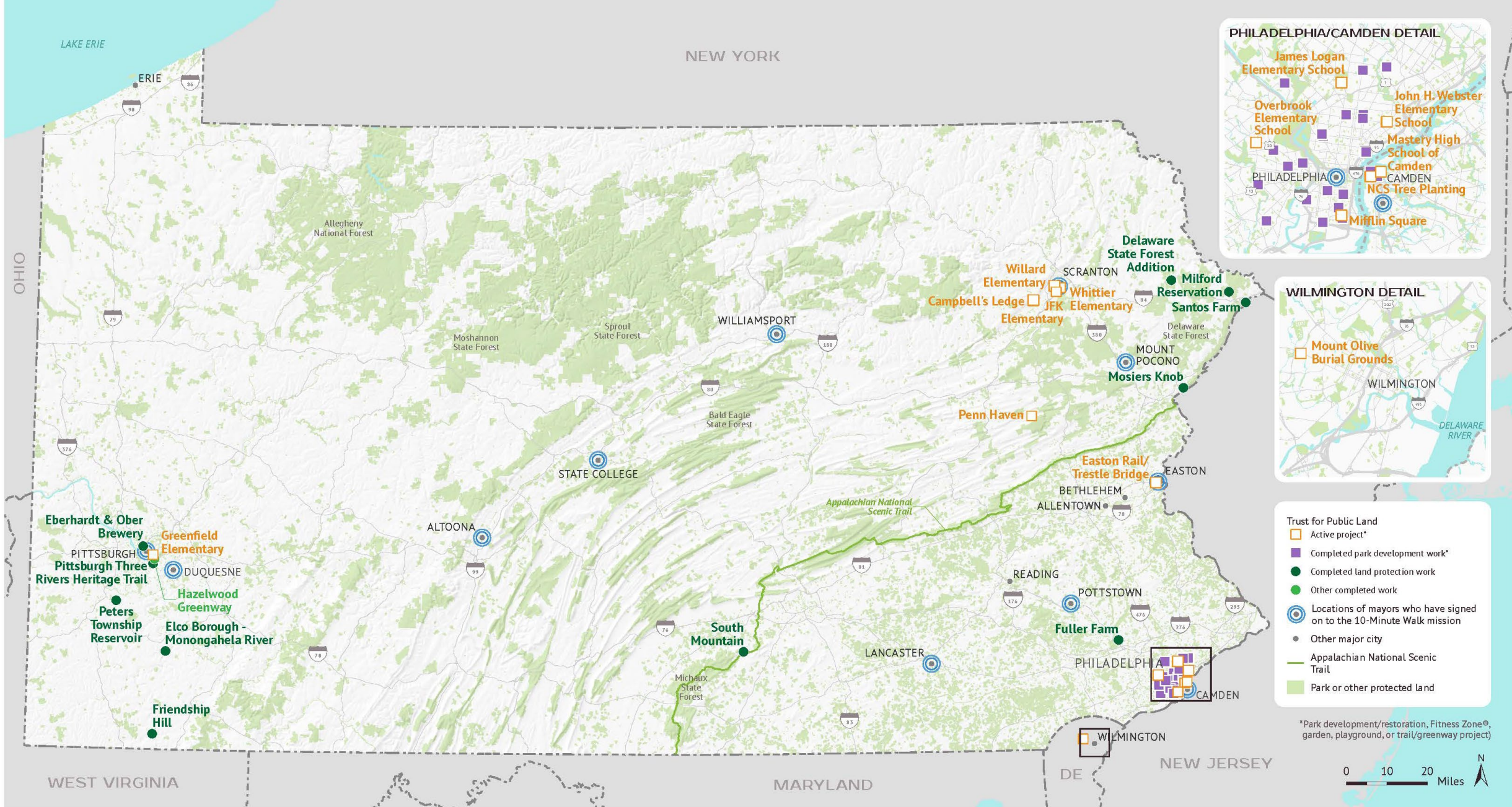


**TRUST FOR
PUBLIC
LAND®**

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

**Elizabeth Class-Maldonado,
Pennsylvania State Director**





Pennsylvania

Active and Completed work





Parks and Schoolyards Program

Philadelphia, Scranton and Pittsburgh

We work in partnership with school districts, city agencies and local community organizations for the development of these public spaces.

Through our participatory design process, we engage with students, parents and neighbors to understand their needs and design together the space they would like to enjoy.

More than **7,500 students** have a new place to play and learn.

More than **200,000 community members** now live within a 10-Minute Walk of a green space.

13 million gallons of stormwater managed per year.

1,140 acres protected.

Our projects have pushed to improve health outcomes, increase equitable access to nature, strengthen local economies, protect critical ecosystem and build climate-resilient communities.



SCHOOLYARDS



PARKS



Our Land and Trail Work In PA

Penn Haven

In 2025, we protected a 1,140-acre of land in the Black Creek Gorge of Carbon County, Pennsylvania, creating a new trail connection between the Borough of Weatherly and Lehigh Gorge State Park providing the Weatherly residence with healthy outdoor accessible areas rich with economic benefit and recreational activity.

Delaware & Lehigh (D&L) Trail Expansion & Easton Highline

TPL supports improvements and connections along the 144-mile D&L trail, linking communities across five Pennsylvania counties.

This connects with the **Easton Highline** in Northampton County which will transform an elevated rail bridge into a park and trail connection. This continues to promote active transportation, expand recreational access as well as economic activity throughout the region.

Campbell Ledge

In 2025, we completed Phase 1 of the Campbell's Ledge project which is a 246-acre natural landmark with variable biodiversity and unique geology. Phase 2 will focus on connecting this trail system to Duryea to expand the outdoor access to the community and economic opportunities.





Pennsylvania's program continues to ensure that people have equal access to nature from now and into the future.



We work with communities to use parks and natural places as tools for addressing critical challenges.

We believe that parks and lands unite us.



Everyone deserves healthy, livable communities for generations to come.



**TRUST FOR
PUBLIC
LAND®**

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

**Jennifer Clinton,
Senior Conservation
Economist**



Pennsylvania Prioritization Mapping Process

Advancing Recreation Oriented Conservation



Outdoor Recreation in Pennsylvania

US BEA ORSA Economic Benefits

In 2023, outdoor recreation provided:

- over \$18.9 billion in value add to the Commonwealth;
- 168,322 jobs Paying \$8.7 billion in wages and salaries

Pennsylvania was ranked #8 for value add (GDP) from outdoor recreation activities, including boating/fishing, RVing, motorcycling/ATVing, bicycling, climbing, hiking, camping, horseback riding, snow activities, and more





Aligning Opportunity, Need, & Impact

Advancing Recreation-Oriented Conservation

- **Opportunity:** Federal Funding Availability, Existing Recreation Amenities
- **Need:** Economic Distress, Park Equity Gap
- **Impact:** Climate Resilience, Outdoor Recreation Employment

A vertical bar on the left side of the slide, composed of several overlapping colored segments: orange, yellow, green, and cyan.

**How do you define “outdoor equity” in
your community?**

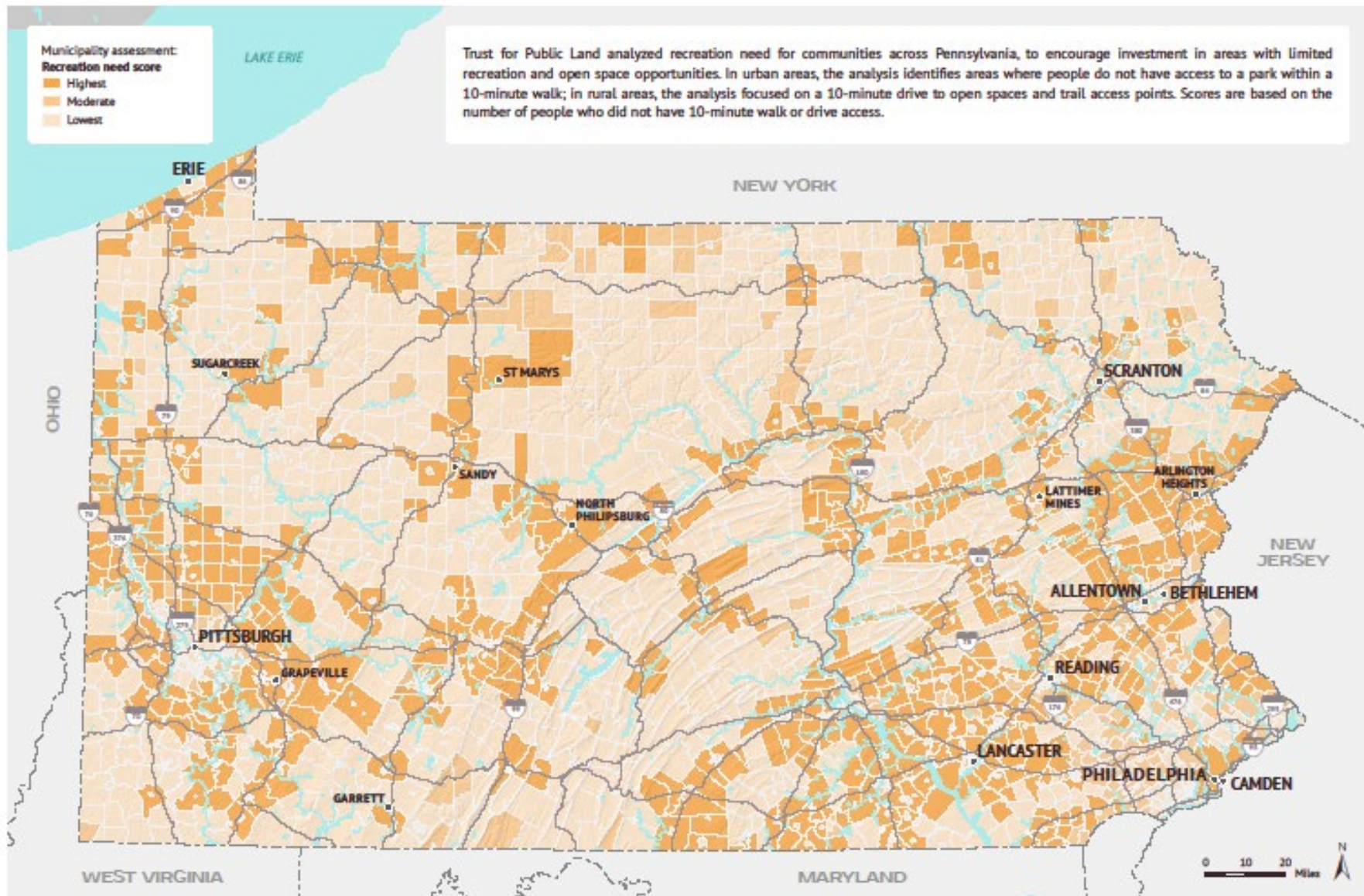
Recreational Attractions

Included in analysis

- Accessible hiking trails (including national scenic or historic trails, trails on state and local public lands)
- Acres of public lands (State Game Lands, Bureau of State Parks, PA Fish and Boat Commission, Bureau of Forestry, PA Game Commission, PA Historical and Museum Commission, US Army Corps of Engineers, National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service)
- Recreational Waterways (Wild and scenic designated rivers, wilderness trout streams, Class A trout streams, trout stocked streams, and DCNR-designated best fishing waters)
- Recreational Waterbodies (Lakes and Reservoirs from PA Fish and Boat Commission list for stocking/regulation)
- Boating Access Points (ramps for motorboats, water trail access points for non-motorized boating)
- Miles of rail trails
- Acres of backcountry recreational experiences on public lands (more than 1.5m from development, paved roads, or energy infrastructure)



Photo: Colton Point State Park, fishhawk/flickr

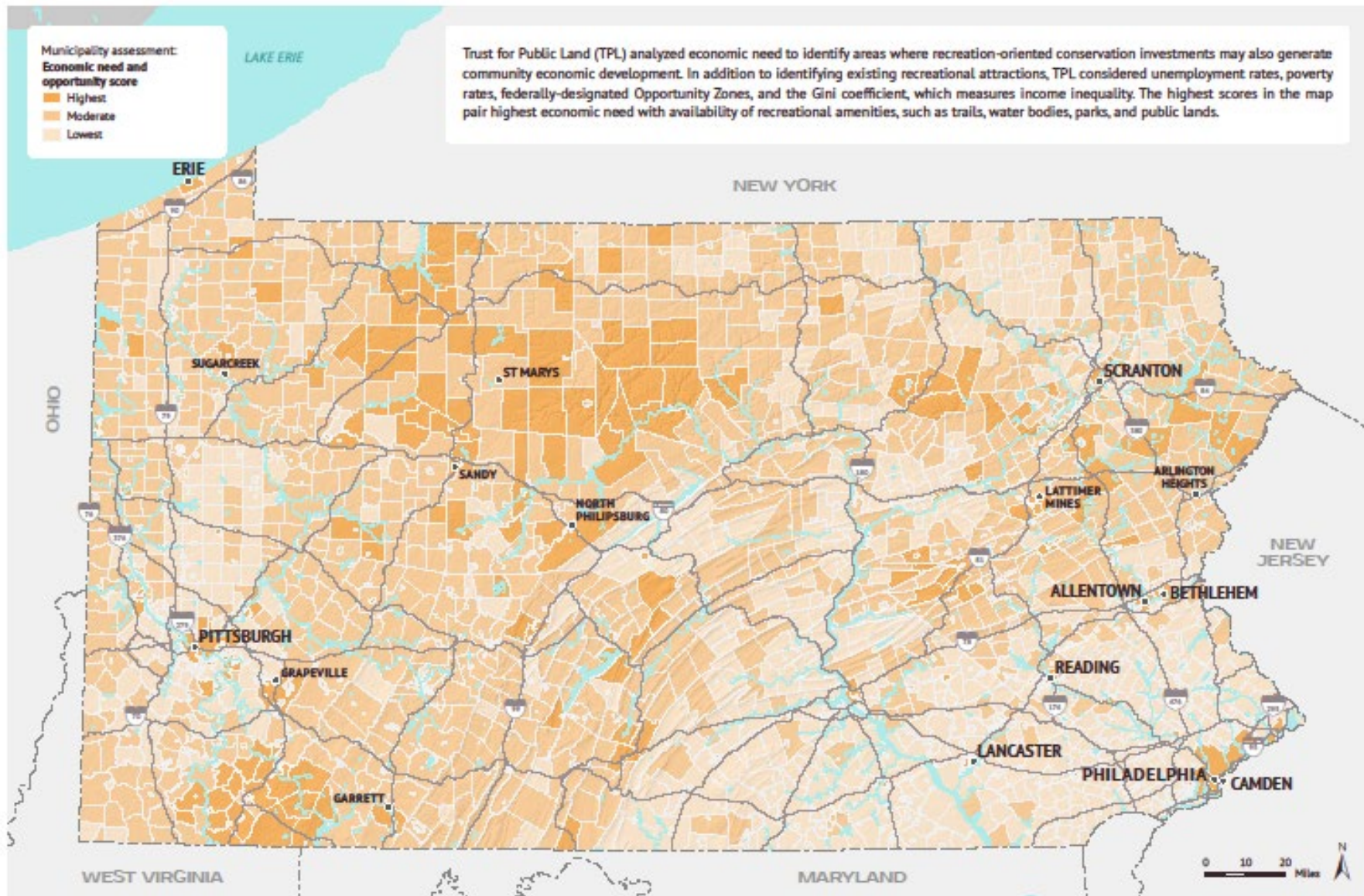


Recreation Need

ADVANCING RECREATION-ORIENTED CONSERVATION IN PENNSYLVANIA

May 2, 2024. Copyright © Trust for Public Land. Trust for Public Land and Trust for Public Land logo are federally registered marks of Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only. www.tpl.org



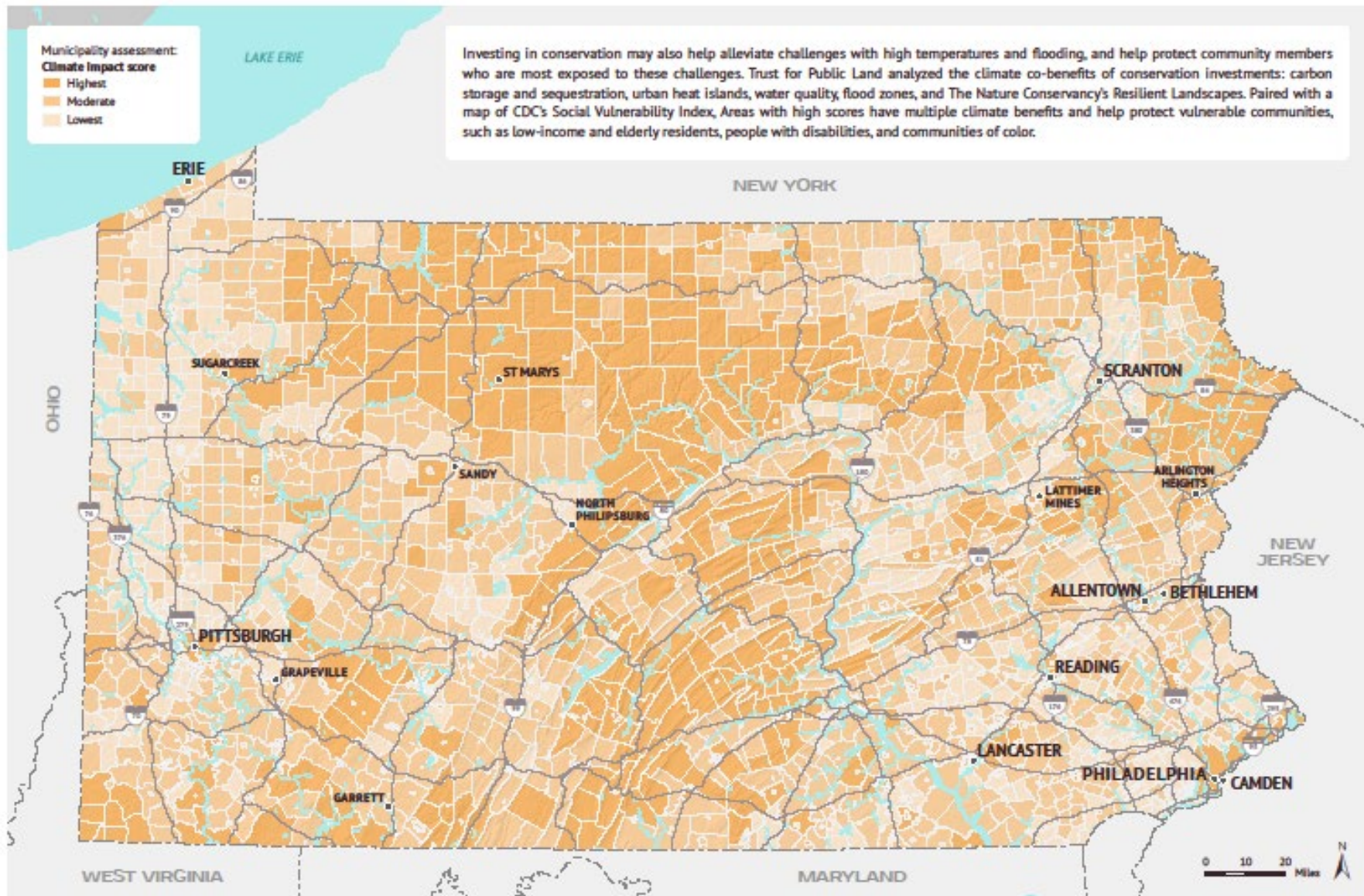


Economic Need and Opportunity

ADVANCING RECREATION-ORIENTED CONSERVATION IN PENNSYLVANIA

May 2, 2024. Copyright © Trust for Public Land. Trust for Public Land and Trust for Public Land logo are federally registered marks of Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only. www.tpl.org



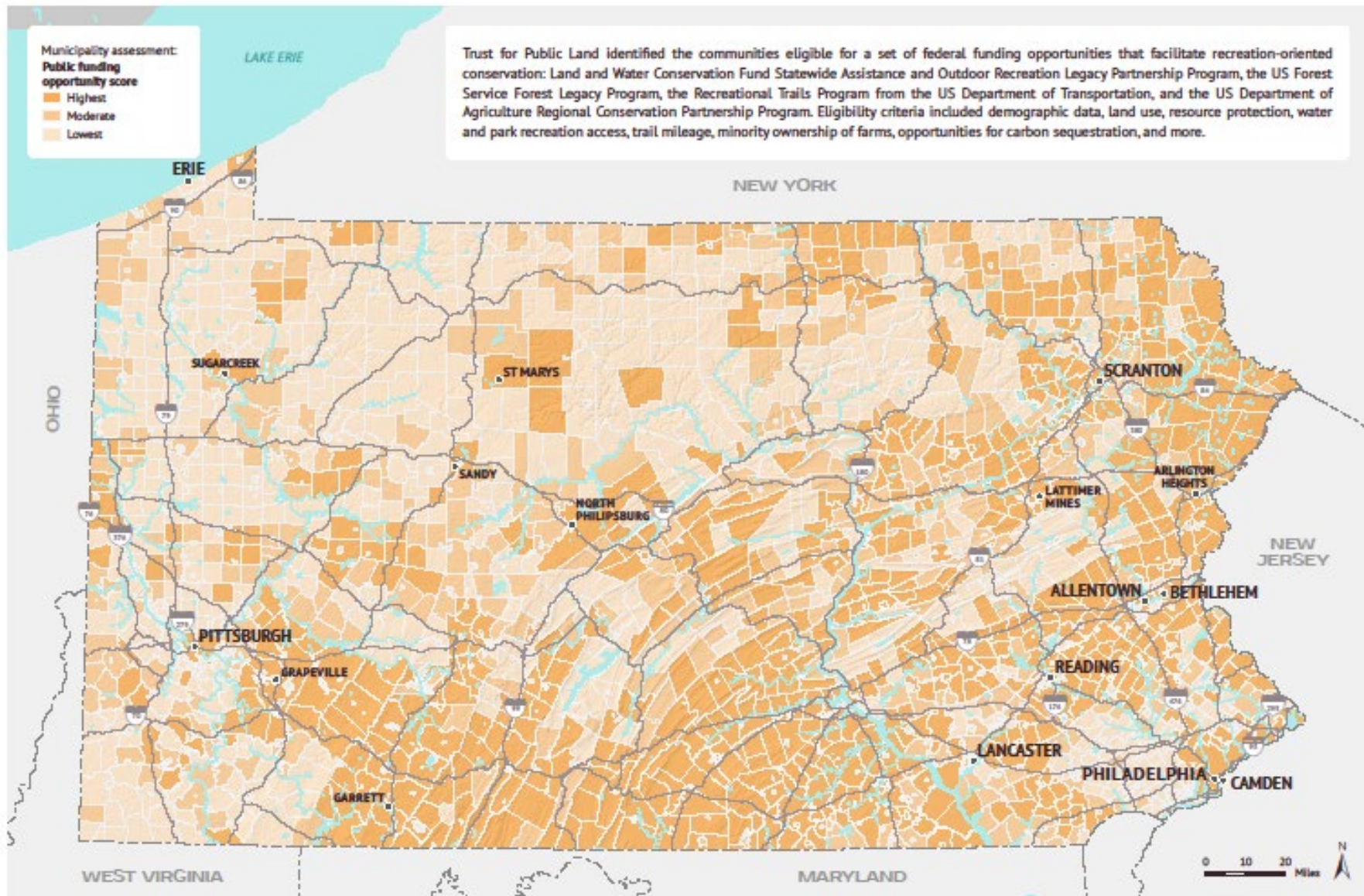


Climate Impact

ADVANCING RECREATION-ORIENTED CONSERVATION IN PENNSYLVANIA

May 2, 2024. Copyright © Trust for Public Land. Trust for Public Land and Trust for Public Land logo are federally registered marks of Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only. www.tpl.org





Public Funding Opportunity

ADVANCING RECREATION-ORIENTED CONSERVATION IN PENNSYLVANIA

May 2, 2024. Copyright © Trust for Public Land. Trust for Public Land and Trust for Public Land logo are federally registered marks of Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only. www.tpl.org

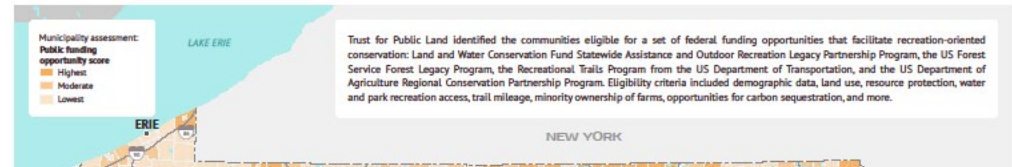




Climate Impact

ADVANCING RECREATION-ORIENTED CONSERVATION IN PENNSYLVANIA

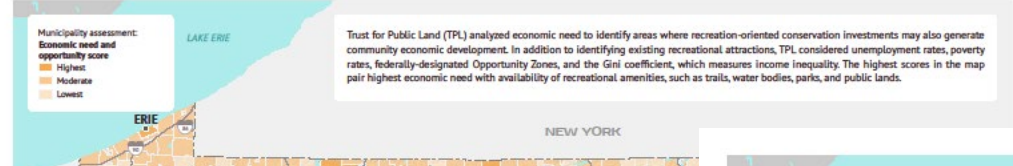
May 2, 2024. Copyright © Trust for Public Land, Trust for Public Land and Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only.



Public Funding Opportunity

ADVANCING RECREATION-ORIENTED CONSERVATION IN PENNSYLVANIA

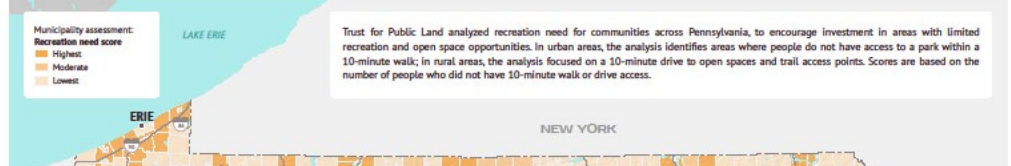
May 2, 2024. Copyright © Trust for Public Land, Trust for Public Land and Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only.



Economic Need and Opportunity

ADVANCING RECREATION-ORIENTED CONSERVATION IN PENNSYLVANIA

May 2, 2024. Copyright © Trust for Public Land, Trust for Public Land and Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only.

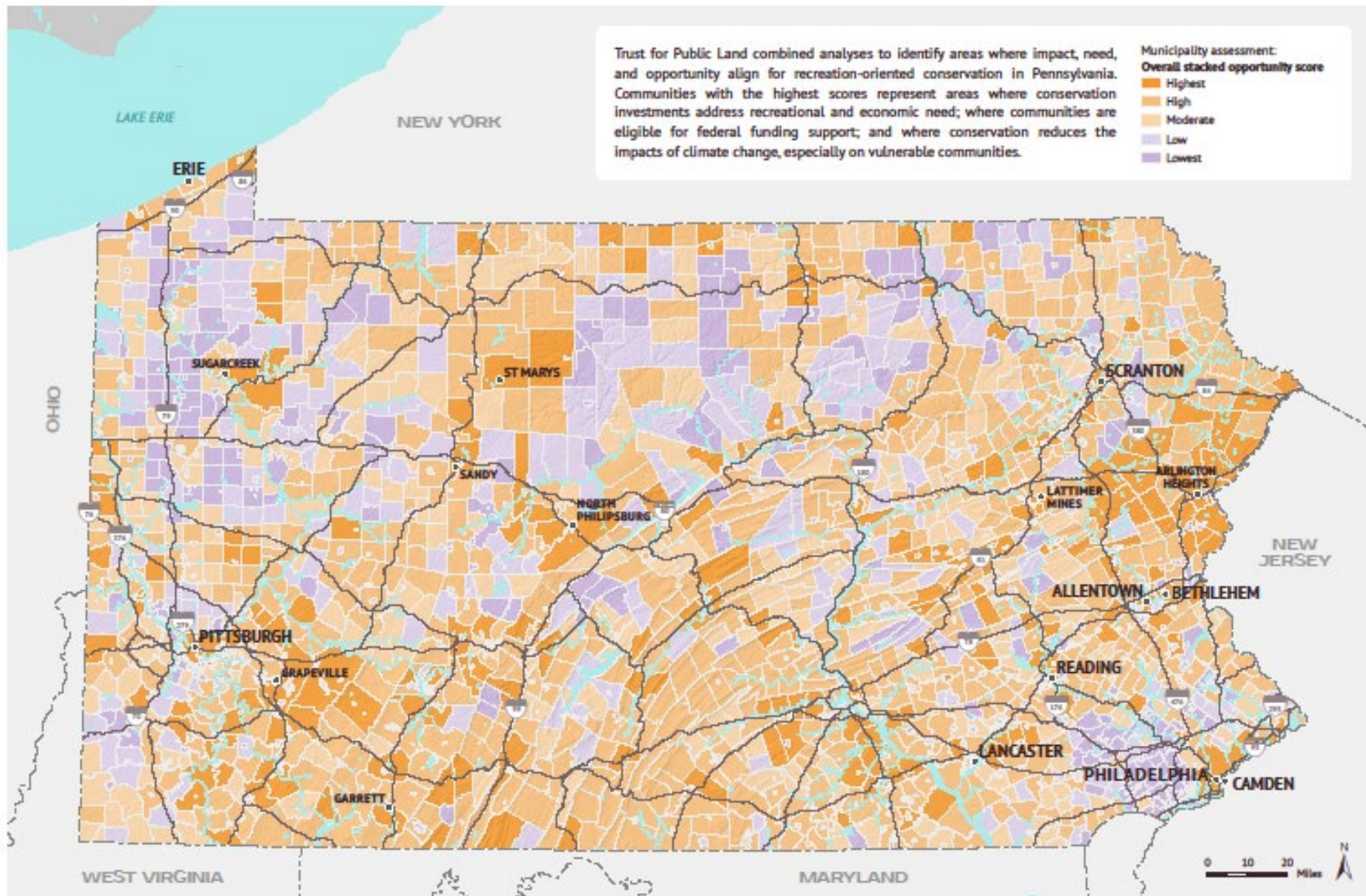


Recreation Need

ADVANCING RECREATION-ORIENTED CONSERVATION IN PENNSYLVANIA

May 2, 2024. Copyright © Trust for Public Land, Trust for Public Land and Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only.





Overall Stacked Opportunity Score

ADVANCING RECREATION-ORIENTED CONSERVATION IN PENNSYLVANIA

May 2, 2024. Copyright © Trust for Public Land. Trust for Public Land and Trust for Public Land logo are federally registered marks of Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only. www.tpl.org



Category	Datasets Included
Climate	Carbon sequestration
	Carbon storage
	Urban Heat Island Anomaly
	Forests to Faucets
	TNC Resilient Landscapes
	FEMA Flood Zones
	Social Vulnerability Index
Public Funding Opportunity	LWCF Stateside Assistance - DCNR & NPS
	LWCF Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLP)
	USFS – Forest Legacy Program
	Recreational Trails Program (part of Transportation Alternatives program)
Recreation Need	Regional Conservation Partnership Program
	10-Minute Walk (Urban Areas)
	10-Minute Drive to Open Space/Trail Access Points(Rural Areas)
Economic Need	Unemployment Change Over 10 Years - County Level
	Gini coefficient (Income inequality)
	Poverty Rate
	Opportunity Zones (federal designation for economic distress)
	Availability of Existing Recreational Attractions >>>

Pause & Reflect

What are your community's particular needs?

What other data layers would help make the case for conservation in your community?



Bethlehem

Mapping Equity and Access in Pennsylvania

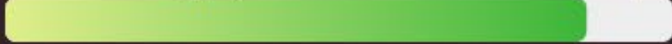
Overall stacked score: 5.0 (out of 5.0)

Sub-scores out of 3.0

- Recreation access need: 1.5
- Federal funding availability: 3.0
- Climate opportunity: 3.0
- Economic Need and Opportunity: 3.0

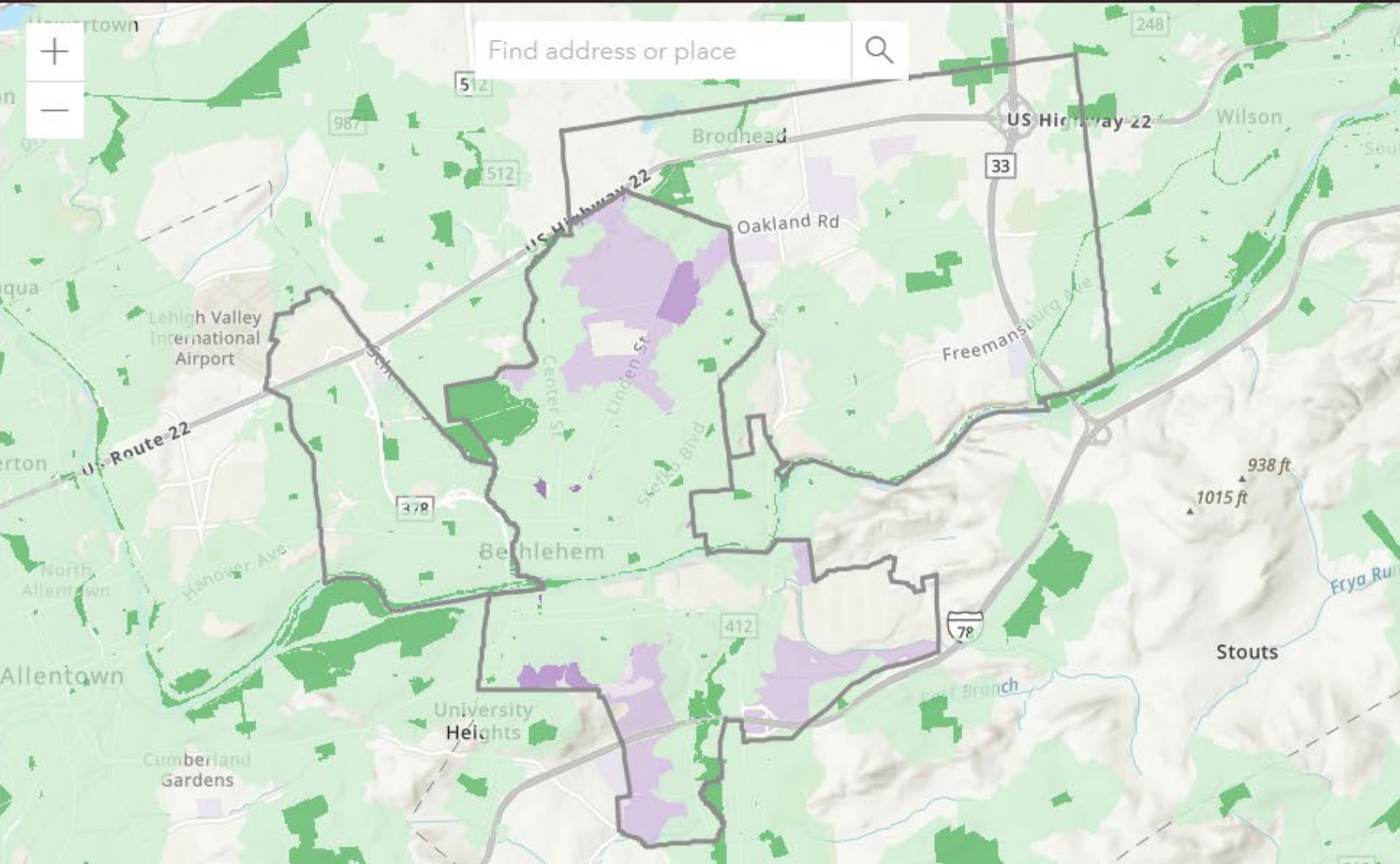


Percent of city population within 10-minute walk park access



87%

10-Minute Walk Statistics



CITY

URBAN AREA

Bethlehem, PA

[Export Access Statistics PDF](#)

87%
of residents live
within a 10-minute
walk of a park

Population Served

50,226

Total Population of City

58,028

City Statistics

Total Number of Parks

31

Total Park Acres

487



Sara Satullo

Deputy Director of Community Development
City of Bethlehem

Celina Daddario

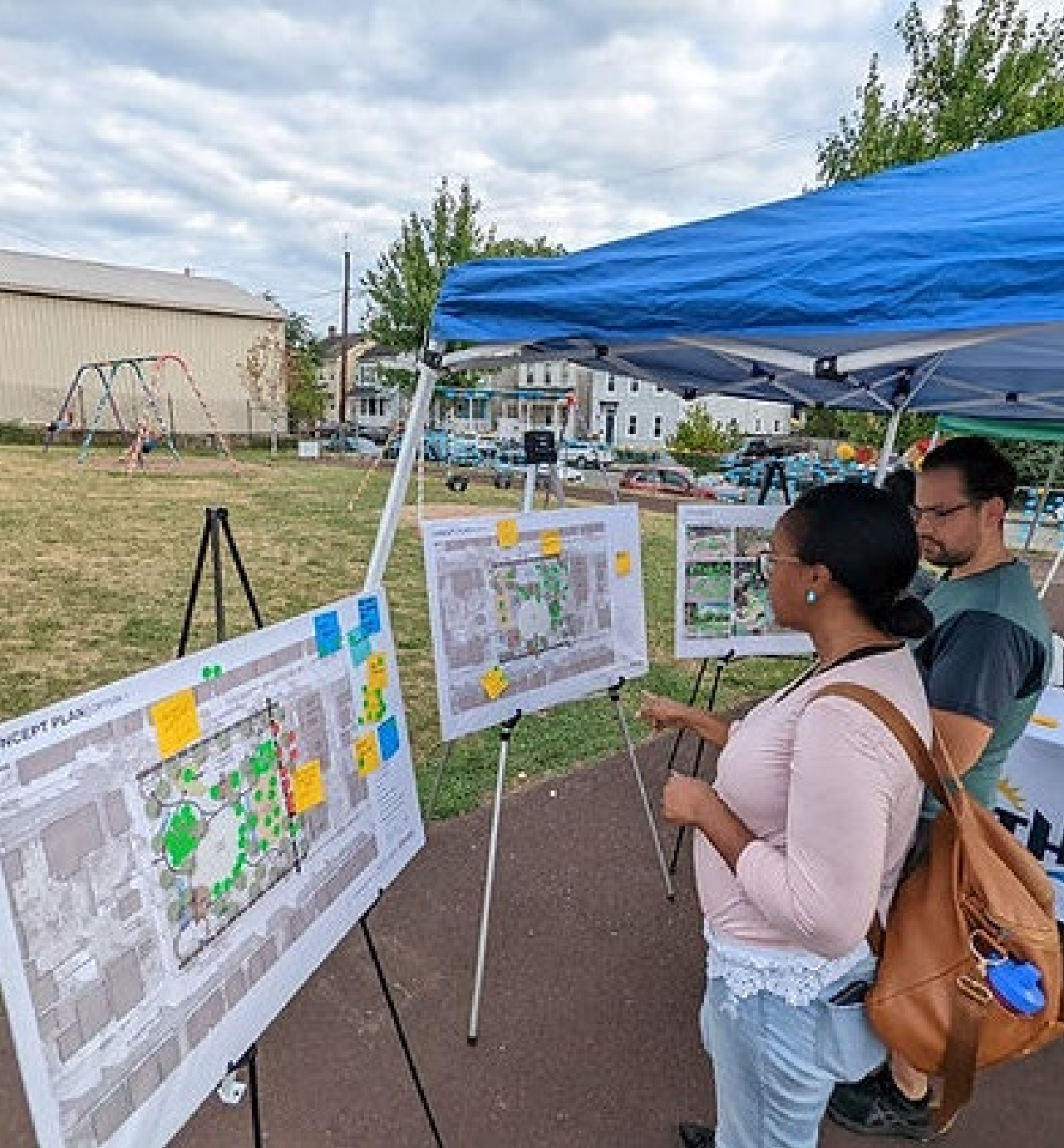
Northside Alive Neighborhood Coordinator
City of Bethlehem

An aerial photograph of a city neighborhood, likely Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. In the foreground, Friendship Park is visible, featuring a large brown dirt area, a green playground, and a baseball field. The surrounding area is densely packed with residential and commercial buildings, including a prominent red brick building. The city extends to the hills in the background under a hazy sky.

Community Vision

Developed in concert with the community

- Friendship Park is a small neighborhood park roughly 1.3 acres.
- Due to the deteriorating conditions, aging recreation equipment, lack of relevant recreational opportunities, inequities across age groups, and severe underutilization, Friendship Park was selected by the City of Bethlehem to undergo an engagement and concept planning process to create a master plan vision for the park.



Community Vision

Design Process and Public Participation

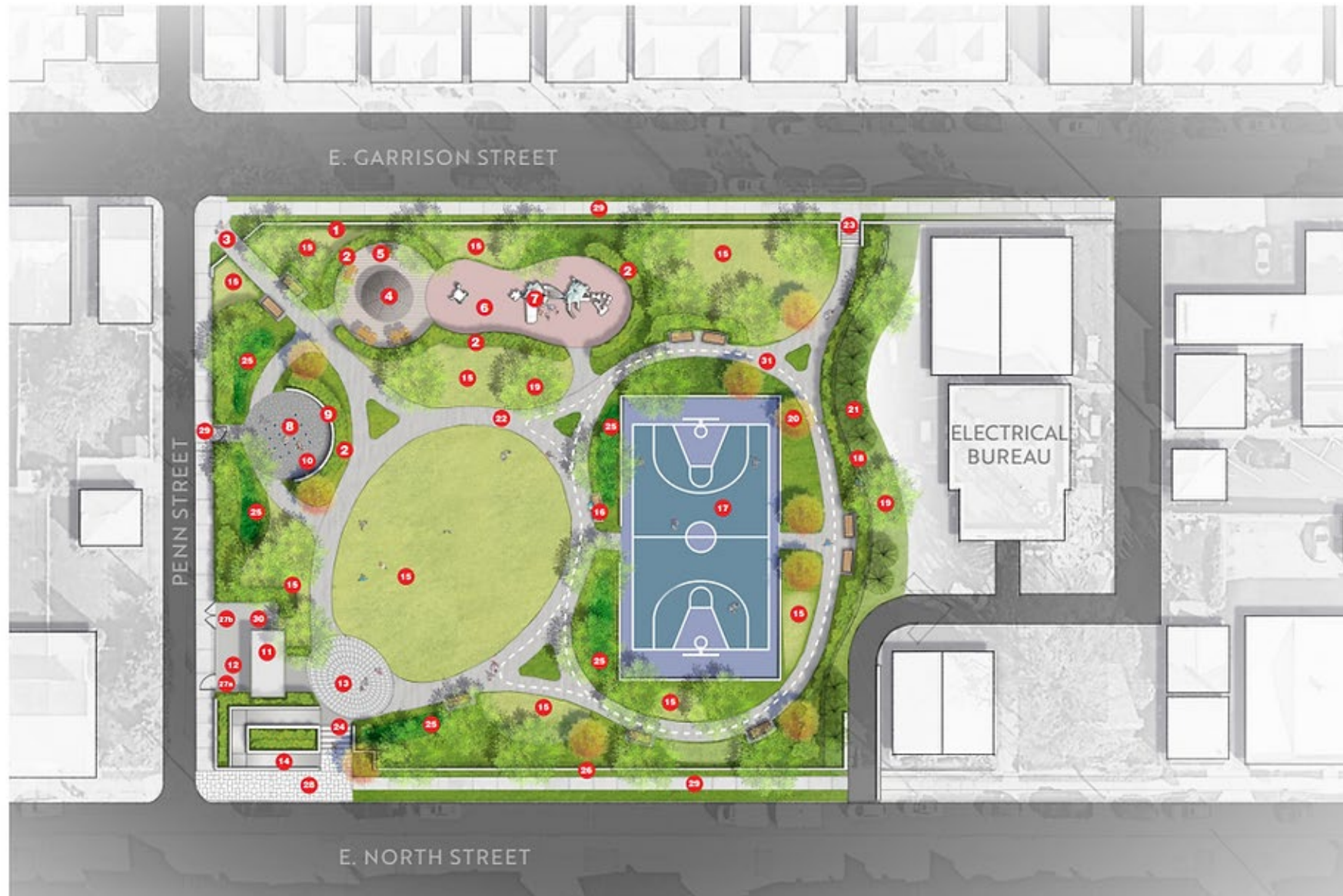
Involving community members in the planning process is ***critical to the success*** of final plans.

- Steering Committee Input
- Workshops & Neighborhood Meetings
- Block Party in the Park

We learned how our community used the park, how it could be improved, and what they wanted to see in the new design.

The planning study, completed in January 2023, estimated the renovation to cost around \$1.4 million.

PRELIMINARY DRAFT MASTER PLAN



LEGEND

- 1 Existing Fence (to Remain)
- 2 Hedge
- 3 New Entrance (ADA Accessible)
- 4 Pavilion(20' Diameter)
- 5 Picnic Tables
- 6 New Playground Surfacing
- 7 Existing Play Equipment (to Remain)
- 8 Water Jets
- 9 18" Seat Wall
- 10 ± 35' Diameter Splash Plaza
- 11 Existing Storage Building
- 12 Storage Area
- 13 Entrance Plaza with Electrical Outlets
- 14 Ramp
- 15 Lawn
- 16 Bench
- 17 Basketball Court with Perimeter Fencing
- 18 8' Fencing
- 19 Shade Trees
- 20 Flowering Trees
- 21 Evergreen Screen
- 22 Asphalt Walkway
- 23 Existing Stairs (to Remain)
- 24 New Entry Steps
- 25 Stormwater Management
- 26 Existing Stone Walls(to Remain)
- 27a Pedestrian Gate
- 27b Vehicular Gate
- 28 Special Plaza Pavement
- 29 Sidewalk
- 30 Truck Parking/Unloading
- 31 Bicycle Track Striping

OLRP: Opportunity

Process Overview

- Marked Bethlehem's first time applying for a federal parks grant
- TPL staff walked us through unique grant requirements and helped us craft narrative
- Thrilled we learned of opportunity to increase equitable outdoor access



OLRP: Lessons Learned

Process Overview

- Familiarize yourself with Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) early
 - Public access needed in perpetuity
- Patience is needed: aligning funding opportunities, submission to state first
- Technical needs: mapping, survey work
- Federal grants are complex and have unique compliance requirements (but it's doable)
- It takes a village!

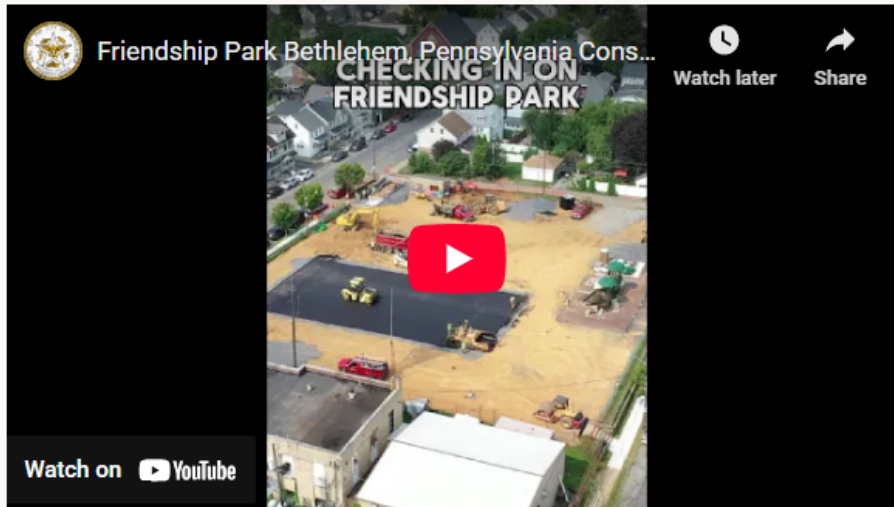


What's New on the Northside!

[Home](#)[Events](#)[Get Involved](#)[Contact Us](#)

Friendship Park Update

We recently met up with Mayor, J. William Reynolds to share an update on the construction taking place at Friendship Park. Check out the full video for a behind the scenes look at the progress so far!



Stay tuned for details on our annual Northside Alive Block Party which will take place when construction is completed at Friendship Park!

Follow us on our socials to stay up to date with the latest information about this project!

Communication

Continued connections with the community

Keeping your community informed throughout the project continues to build trust and creates documentation to support any grant reports required.

- Newsletters (city or organization)
- Social Media Updates
- Videos: [Friendship Park Bethlehem, Pennsylvania Construction Update](#)
- [Project Resource Page](#)

Friendship Park, Bethlehem PA

Grand Opening - Saturday, May 16th, 2026

Before



After



Q&A

Please share your questions in the chat!



Exit Ticket

Please complete a brief, 2-minute exit ticket to help inform future sessions!

Scan the QR code or click here:

<https://forms.office.com/r/cveYgcAcmA>

Tools for Evaluating Park Equity &
Access in PA: Exit Ticket





Since 1972, TPL has protected 4 million acres of public land; created 5,364 parks, trails, schoolyards, and iconic outdoor places; raised \$100 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](https://www.tpl.org).

Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

Elizabeth Class-Maldonado
elizabeth.class@tpl.org

Jennifer Clinton
jennifer.clinton@tpl.org

Sophie Neuhaus
sophie.neuhaus@tpl.org

Next Steps

- **Complete the Exit**
Ticket: <https://forms.office.com/r/cveYgcAcmA>
- Series Invitations
- Report-Out Slides & Recording
- **Session 2: April 23, 2026**
Open Space as a Catalyst for Community Impact

Thank You!