

THEORY OF CHANGE:

People, Parks and Power National Funding Initiative



Through the *People, Parks, and Power* (P3) initiative, we will accelerate a new movement for park and green space equity led by the communities that, for generations, have suffered the health, social, and environmental impacts of park, green space, and other built environment inequities. By using strategies drawn from public health successes and the legacy of power building movements led by people of color, we can transform the field at this unprecedented moment in time and eliminate longstanding park and green space inequities.

The Problem	The Strategy	Indicators of Progress	Long-Term Outcomes
<i>The People, Parks, and Power initiative</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racist public policies (e.g., segregation, redlining, etc.) • Exclusionary practices within the traditional conservation movement • Park and green space inequities contribute to poor community health outcomes • African Americans, Latinos and low-income communities marginalized in park and green space work • Limited public agency leadership and capacity to operationalize park and green space equity* • Flawed narratives • Research gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build power and invest in African American, Latino, and low-income communities • Marginalized groups advocate for local policy change focused on park and green space equity • Enhance public agency & conservation leadership and capacity for parks and green space equity • Formalize inclusive national network for park and green space equity • Bolster strategic communications and support narrative change • Conduct timely and authoritative research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups led by African Americans, Latinos, and other people of color organizing and advocating for park and green space equity • Communities most impacted by park and green space inequities lead efforts to define the problem and implement solutions • Measurable progress towards strong, effective public policy and institutional practice change • Increased capacity and leadership among public agencies & conservation organizations to operationalize equity in their work and serve as effective allies • Representative national network for park and green space equity established • New narratives that support park and green space equity • Improved and actionable data for park and green space equity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased power and capacity among marginalized communities • Local policy change victories, e.g., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased resources for parks in high need urban communities • Community engagement units established within agencies • Anti-displacement provisions included in park equity policies • Reduced park and green space inequities and measurable steps toward health equity made • Equity is effectively operationalized by public agencies & conservation organizations • New narratives widely adopted that support park and green space equity • Growing body of research and evidence to advance park and green space equity • Innovation and expansion of park and green space equity action across the U.S.
<i>Complementary efforts and initiatives</i>			

*PARK AND GREEN SPACE EQUITY FRAMEWORK

The framework presented here draws from an equity model advanced by scholars and practitioners.^{1,2} It has been adapted for the park and green space (hereafter “green space”) equity realm with examples that provide practitioners, advocates, funders, and other stakeholders actionable guidance to advance green space equity.^{3,4}

Procedural equity involves decision-making processes—related to all aspects of green space, from placement to design, construction, and programming—that are transparent, equitable, and inclusive with regard to who participates, how they are engaged, and how input is valued and applied. It also covers processes inherent in the equitable and just provision of green spaces services. Procedural equity can be assessed in relation to core functions that include but are not limited to:

- Decision-making about all aspects of green space functions
- Community engagement to secure input at each stage of green space development
- Condition and quality of green space infrastructure, amenities, and features
- Staffing and services related to operations, maintenance, and programming

Distributional equity means fair distribution of resources, benefits, and burdens, and prioritizes resources for communities experiencing the greatest inequities. Distributional equity is often the first thing people think about when they think about equity because it is the most quantifiable. It covers:

- Distribution and accessibility of green spaces in communities
- Distribution of facilities, amenities, and features placed within a green space

- Fiscal allocation formulas for green space development or improvements, including general funds, public finance measure expenditure plans, competitive grantmaking processes, etc.
- Allocation of funding and staff to conduct inclusive and relevant recreational programming and ensure maintenance of facilities
- Perceived and actual safety in and around green spaces
- Prioritizing strategic planning and innovation focused on achieving green space equity

Structural equity addresses underlying structural factors and policies that give rise to green space inequities in the first place. It makes a commitment to correct past harms and prevent future unintended consequences. While less quantifiable than the other dimensions of equity, structural equity related to green space can include:

- Improving staff representation at all agency levels among people of color and other marginalized groups
- Internalizing and operationalizing equity and racial justice across agency staff and leadership, including local knowledge of historical and present-day injustices and accountability metrics to redress spatial and operational disparities
- Designing and programming park facilities and green spaces to be sites of healing and resilience, and address a holistic range of neighborhood needs, threats, assets, and opportunities
- Job training and workforce development programs for residents of high need communities
- Developing protections to ensure that green space development does not lead to displacement of long-term residents and businesses.

1 Yuen, T. et al. (2017). Guide to equitable, community driven climate preparedness planning. Urban Sustainability Directors Network. <https://www.adaptationclearinghouse.org/resources/guide-to-equitable-community-driven-climate-preparedness-planning.html>

2 Sister, C., Wolch, J., & Wilson, J. (2010). Got green? Addressing environmental justice in park provision. *GeoJournal*. 75:229-248.

3 Sister, C., Wilson, J. & Wolch, J. (2008). The Green Visions Plan for 21st century Southern California. Access to parks and park facilities in the Green Visions Plan Region. University of Southern California, GIS Research Laboratory and Center for Sustainable Cities, Los Angeles, CA, 17.

4 Boone, C.G., Buckley, G.L., Grove, J.M. & Sister, C. (2009). Parks and people: An environmental justice inquiry in Baltimore, Maryland. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 99(4), 767-787.