Municipal Park Land

Achieve at least 7 acres of municipal park land per 1000 residents.

WHAT IS IT?

In a survey of 75 major cities across the United States, there is a median of 13.1 acres of municipal park land per 1000 residents. On average across cities and towns nationwide, park land comprises approximately 6% of city land. In total, parks contain an estimated 370 million urban trees, equating to $300 billion in structural value. Urban trees also provide $500 million of economic benefits per year.

Urban trees have significant environmental and health benefits as well. There is approximately 75 million tons of carbon stored in urban trees and 102 million tons stored in soils of urban parks. Annually, urban trees remove 2.4 million tons of carbon from the atmosphere. Urban parks generally record lower air temperatures than surrounding urban areas as well.

In Ohio, the ratio of municipal park land per 1000 residents varies by city. Cincinnati has the greatest ratio, with 22.6 acres per 1000 residents. Among other large cities, Columbus has 18 acres per 1000 residents, Toledo has 11.2, and Cleveland has 7.8.

Urban park planning should include equity considerations as well. Approximately 69% of Americans living in the 100 largest cities live within a 10-minute walk of an urban park. A study of Cleveland, OH found that there is potential for high impact with new parks in the neighborhoods of West Boulevard, Clark Fulton, Union Miles, Kamm's Corners, and Old Brooklyn. The highest priority of the recommended areas was West Boulevard, where a new park would provide 86% of the tract's population with access to a park within a 10-minute walk. A new park would bring an estimated $313,000 of economic activity to the neighborhood and reduce healthcare costs by $131,000 annually.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- Annual air pollution removal and economic value of urban trees is estimated to be 80 pounds of $300 per acre of tree cover.
- Urban parks have carbon storage potential of:
  - Carbon storage = 40 tons or $800 per acre of tree cover
  - Carbon storage = 32 tons or $650 per acre of soil
  - Annual carbon removal = 1.2 tons or $25 per acre of tree cover

BENEFITS

Reduced urban heat island effect

Improve air quality

Increase the sequestration of carbon

Increase recreational economic benefits

Improve the quality of life and community health outcomes

HOW CAN COMMUNITIES IMPLEMENT THIS POLICY?

Cities can utilize effective planning tools to increase community participation and optimize the benefits of creating new municipal parks.

- **Utilize GIS mapping to identify neighborhoods where green space is most needed.** GIS mapping tools can be used to identify neighborhoods with the least access to green spaces and municipal parks. City practitioners should also keep equity considerations in mind when prioritizing the creation of new parks, including population density and socioeconomics to improve access to green spaces for low-income communities.
- **Identify local healthcare institutions or providers as potential partners.** Community parks and recreational facilities can significantly improve outcomes for mental health, obesity, and general physical health. By engaging healthcare stakeholders, the city can increase buy-in during the development phase.
- **Engage community leaders and residents in planning of new parks.** Cities should prioritize community engagement in the creation of new parks to integrate community needs and voices. By incorporating this feedback, cities can ensure that there is equitable access to parks and community partners to assist in implementation.
- **Explore creative financing tools to fund the creation of new parks.** Cities have begun to use innovative financing tools to generate revenue for urban parks departments, including sugary drink taxes, municipal bonds, or development mandates. Under development mandates, cities can require that new private developments either create new park land or contribute money to the city's park fund.