



Connecting everyone to the outdoors™

Elevating access

Lessons learned from TPL's efforts to protect urban and community green spaces

Photo: Joe Martinez



PS 156 Waverly and LS 392 - Brooklyn, NY

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

**PEOPLE NEED
PARKS AND
GREEN SPACES**



But great parks aren't created equal.
**Today, one in three people,
including 28 million children,
don't have a park or green space
within a 10-minute walk (half mile)
of home.**



Communities that value and invest in
**OUTDOOR ACCESS
FOR ALL ARE...**



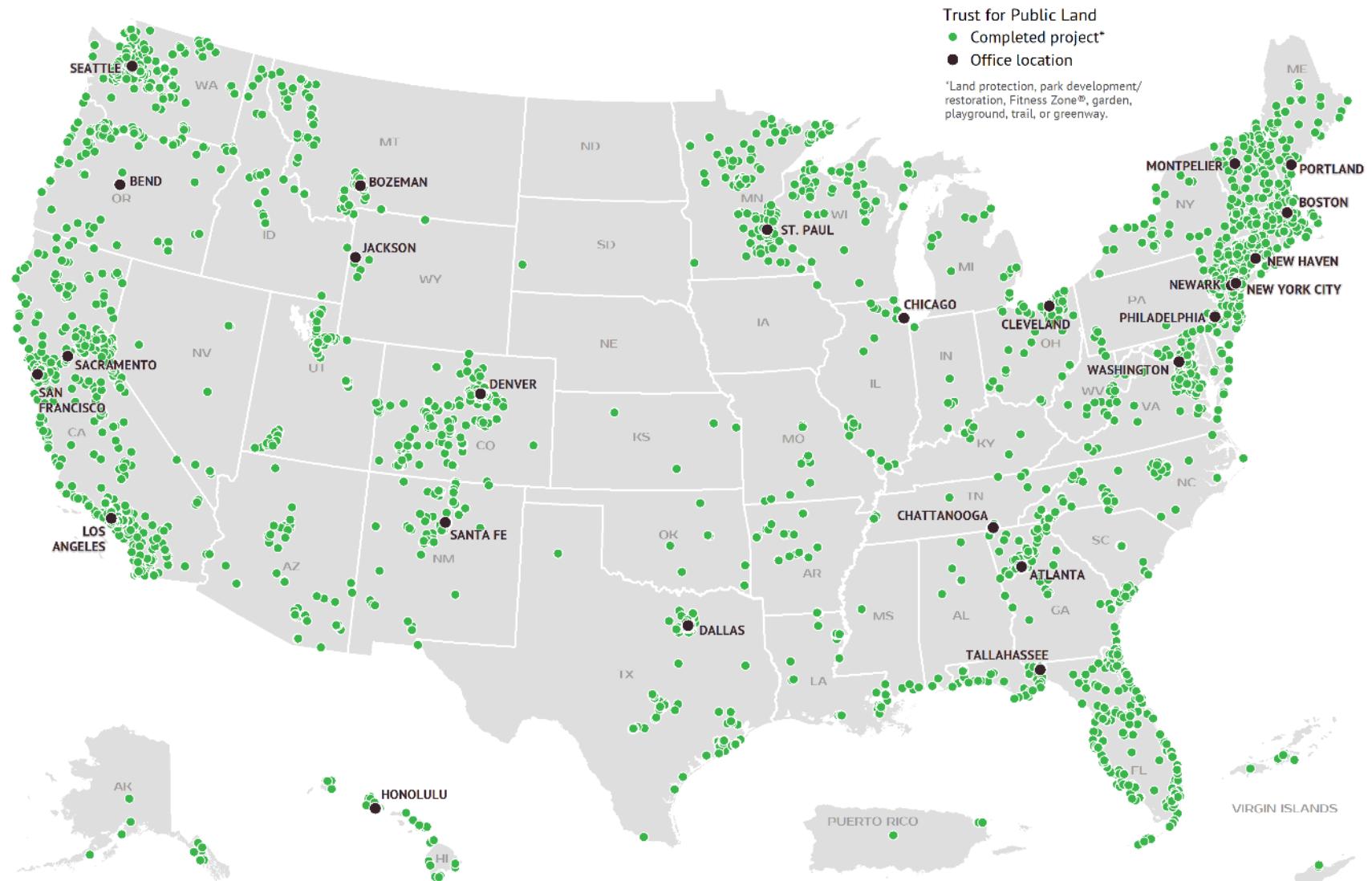
HEALTHIER

MORE RESILIENT

MORE INCLUSIVE

NATIONAL FOOTPRINT. LOCAL IMPACT.

Completed Projects
1973 – December 2025



GOALS OF PRESENTATION

WHAT SPACES COUNT

For 10-minute walk, we've developed criteria for parks and park-like spaces – our analogue to '**community greenspace**'

DOES IT COUNT?

A game

PROXIMITY TO PEOPLE

The 10-minute walk makes explicit how we measure proximity to people – our analogue to '**urban**'

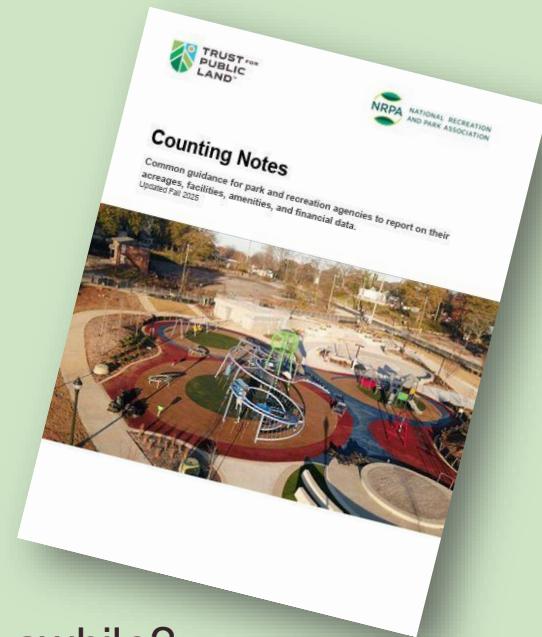
DATA PROCESSING PIPELINE

Practical tools and tips we've developed from updating every year across the 100 most populous cities

WHAT TYPES OF SPACES COUNT

To include in 10-minute walk, a site must:

- ✓ **Be outdoors**
- ✓ **Be a named destination** and advertised on agency website
- ✓ Encourage **informal public use** (e.g. is public encouraged to walk through and stay awhile?)
- ✓ Encourage at least one ‘park-like’ activity:
 - Socializing
 - Play or exercise
 - Enjoy nature



CONTEXT SPECIFIC DEFINITION

Used in context of supporting creation of places for people to enjoy

Public Access

- Excludes protected lands that restrict access even if conservation benefit
- Don't require public ownership – private spaces w/ public access count (e.g. churches, land trusts, HOAs)
- Do include schoolyards open for community use after hours (even though restricted hours to public)

Type of Space

- Largely want to defer to community on what works for their needs, so fairly flexible criteria
- We don't require "green" space – e.g. plazas, sport fields count
- Importance of being a destination / worthy of a name – as opposed to greening streets or open space

These are specific to the goals of the 10-Minute Walk campaign – it is not intended as a

GOLF COURSES



Randolph Dell Urich Golf Course
Tucson, AZ



Rock Creek Golf Course
Washington, DC

Named place

Advertised on website



Informal public use

Can anybody walk through and stay awhile?



Yes – around perimeter



No – golfers only

Park-like activities

e.g. socializing, play/exercise, enjoy nature



STREETSCAPES



Murals



Boulevard Median
Chicago, IL

Named place

Advertised on website



No – unnamed

Informal public use

Can anybody walk through and stay awhile?



Park-like activities

e.g. socializing, play/exercise, enjoy nature



No – no seating



TRAILWAYS



Bike lanes
Anywhere, US



Paseo Del Bosque
Albuquerque, NM

Named place

Advertised on website



No – unnamed



Informal public use

Can anybody walk through and stay awhile?



Park-like activities

e.g. socializing, play/exercise, enjoy nature



OPEN SPACE



Auten Nature Preserve
Mecklenburg, NC



Drainageway 68
Greensboro, NC

Named place

Advertised on website



No – unnamed & unadvertised

Informal public use

Can anybody walk through and stay awhile?



No – not yet open to public



Park-like activities

e.g. socializing, play/exercise, enjoy nature



CEMETERIES



Arlington National Cemetery
Arlington, VA



Spring Grove Cemetery
Cincinnati, OH

Named place

Advertised on website



Informal public use

Can anybody walk through and stay awhile?



Yes, includes mapped walking trails

Park-like activities

e.g. socializing, play/exercise, enjoy nature



No, explicitly restricts running, eating



COMMUNITY SCHOOLYARDS



Locked Schoolyard

Anywhere, USA



No formal public access policy



PS 156 Waverly and LS 392

New York, NY



No, explicitly closed to public



Yes, explicit signage with hours



Named place

*Formal joint-use agreement or school district policy documented
City & school district willing to advertise as public on website*

Informal public use

*Can anybody walk through and stay awhile
outside of school hours?*

Park-like activities

e.g. socializing, play/exercise, enjoy nature

PRIVATELY MANAGED SPACES (e.g. HOAs)



Featherstone HOA



Central Park HOA

Named place

*City & private manager is willing to advertise park as public on website
City attests meets same maintenance and quality standards*



Named, but not able to advertise as public

Informal public use

*Can anybody **legally** walk through and stay awhile?
No restrictive signage or within gated communities*



No, explicitly private signage

Park-like activities

e.g. socializing, play/exercise, enjoy nature



CLASSIFYING NATURAL VS DESIGNED

	Natural	Designed
Purpose	Managed for conservation and ecological value	Created, constructed, planted, and managed primarily for human use.
Features	Only basic park infrastructure: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bathrooms• Parking• Seating• Trails	Other amenities such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Play areas• Sport fields and courts• Picnic areas• Special uses – golf, skate parks, etc.

(Ok to have associated facilities like nature centers or maintenance facilities)

Excludes undeveloped facilities (e.g. open space) that don't meet core criteria

NATURAL ACREAGE vs. DESIGNED ACREAGE

These sites meet all the criterion for natural acreages



Louise Howard Park
Atlanta, GA



Higgins Beach
Scarborough, ME

Management Purpose
For conservation and ecological value



Defer to agency judgement call

Designed Infrastructure
Only basic park infrastructure



Meets criteria for park-site
i.e. public access



NATURAL ACREAGE vs. DESIGNED ACREAGE

These sites do not meet all the criteria of natural acreage, and should be classified as designed acreage



Rock Creek Golf Course Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Center
Washington, DC Dallas, TX

Management Purpose

For conservation and ecological value



No – primary purpose is golf



Designed Infrastructure

Only basic park infrastructure



No - Specialized gardens

Meets criteria for park-site

i.e. public access



MEASURING PROXIMITY TO PEOPLE



4M

ACRES
PROTECTED



5,504

OUTDOOR SPACES
CREATED



9.7M

PEOPLE
CONNECTED TO
THE OUTDOORS



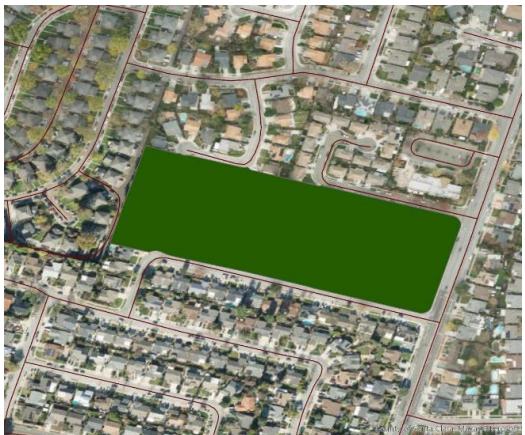
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SECURED IN
PUBLIC FUNDING

Equivalent of 2M
acres protected
lands goal

10-minute walk of
all projects

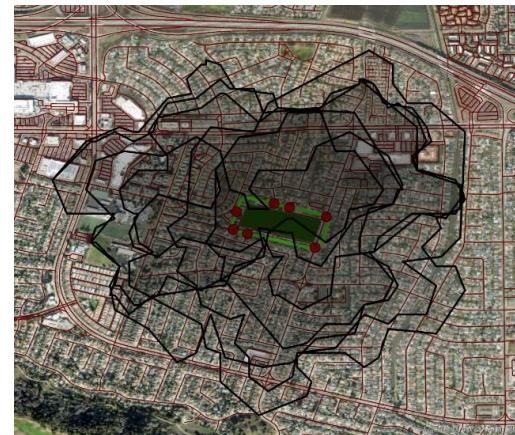
CALCULATING 10-MINUTE WALK



Public Space



Access points

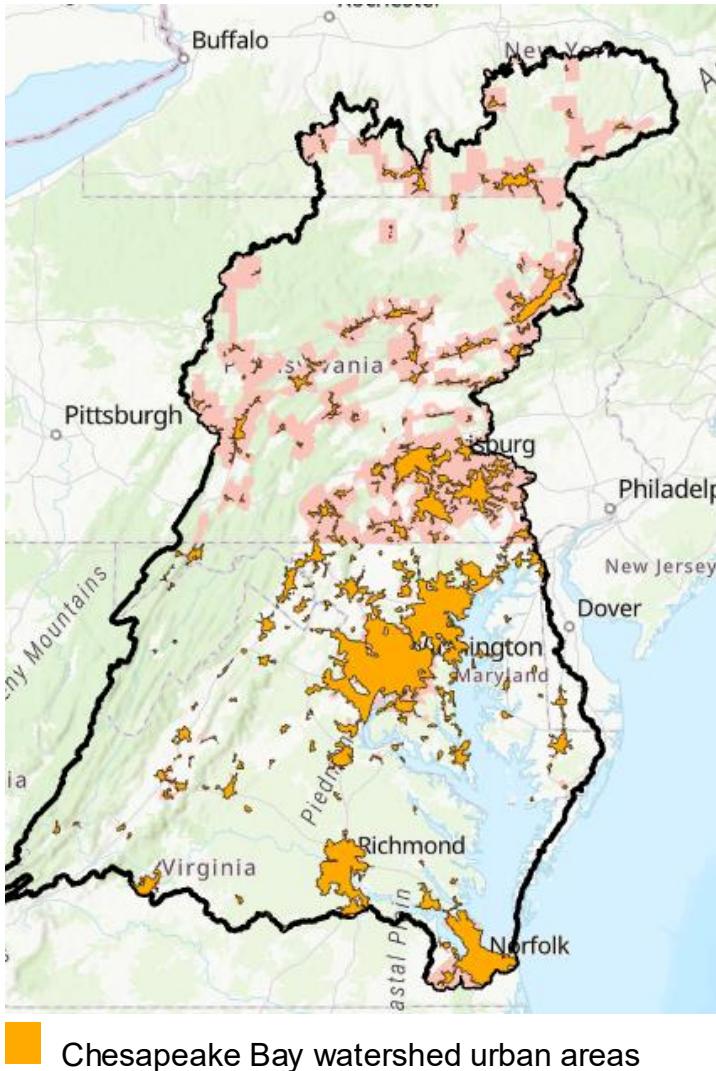


“Walkable” routes



“Walkshed”

TWO OPTIONS FOR MEASURING ACCESS



In the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, urban areas contain:

79% of population (14.7M of 18.6M)

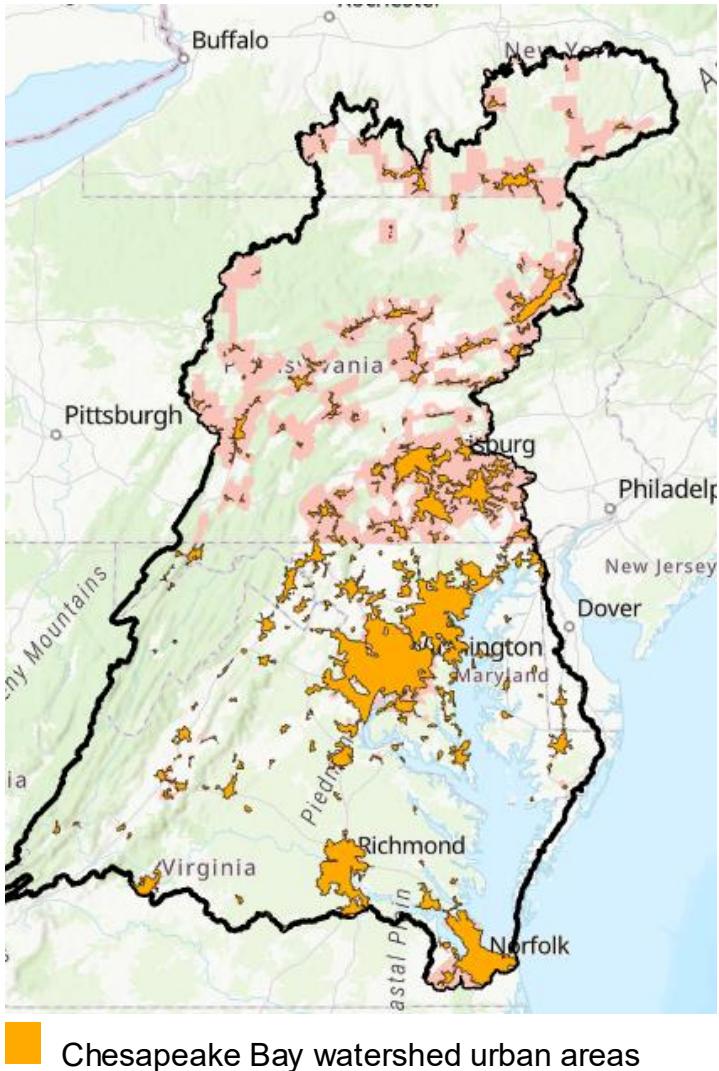
8% of land area (3.4M acres of 42.5M)

3% of protected lands (.3M of 9.1M acres)

About 2/3 are publicly accessible

8.8M of the 14.7M urban area residents (60%) live within a 10-minute walk of a publicly accessible protected land

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Option 1 **3%** of protected lands (.3M of 9.1M acres)
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Option 2 **8.8M** of the 14.7M urban area residents (60%) live within a 10-minute walk of a publicly accessible protected land

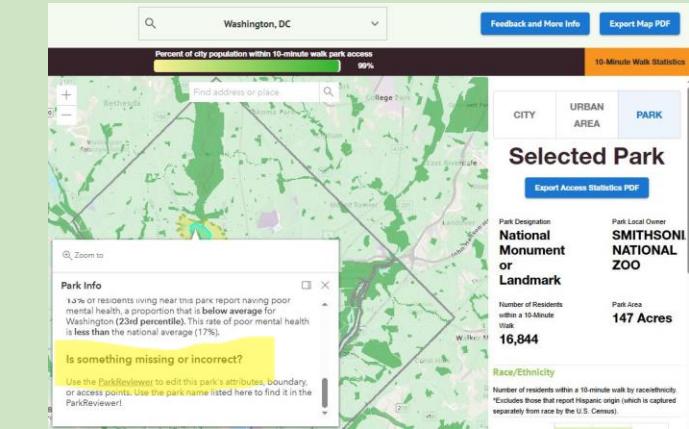
PARKSCORE DATA PROCESSING PIPELINE

ParkScore® Index GIS Data Schema
Fall 2023

Guidelines:
The following table lists the required and desired attributes of parks and greenspace data submitted in the ParkScore schema. All layers can be shared as either a shapefile (.shp), file geodatabase (.gdb), layer package (.lkp), map package (.mrx), or as a shared web service. To help make sure we are fully incorporating your data, please combine into a single layer using Facility_Category to identify each layer if possible, or specify relevant layers below. See the domain tab for specific field category choices - while these are not yet required, we do appreciate any help mapping your field domain categories to the ones in the schema. See the Examples tab for examples of common facility types. See the park inclusion tab for what parks and park-like facilities should be included.

Field name	Description	Required	Agency Field Name (Please provide)
Facility_Categories	Specify the general facility category (parks, natural areas, special-use, schoolyards, trails/greenways or recreation space)	YES	
Facility_Type	Agency-defined facility type (e.g. neighborhood park, golf course, preserve, drainage)	Optional	
Park_Designation	Designation type PAD-US schema	YES	
Park_Name	Name of the park	Yes	
Park_Local_Owner	Name of entity responsible for site's management	Yes	
Park_Local_Manager	Owner type (e.g. city, non-profit, other)	Yes	
Park_Owner_Type	Owner type (e.g. city, nonprofit, city)	YES	
Park_Manager_Type	Owner type (e.g. city, nonprofit, city)	YES	
Park_Status	Status field indicating if facility can access	YES	
Park_Land_Acquisition	Indicates how the site was acquired (e.g. purchase, easement, etc.)	Optional	
Park_Ex_Date	Year opened	Recommended	
Park_Address	Street Address	Recommended	
PercentNaturalArea	Estimated percentage of facility that is natural area. Ok to estimate in increments of 0%, 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100% (Most will be either 0% or 100%). Unique identifier that links custom access points to their corresponding park feature.	Yes if providing custom access points	
Park_UID	Unique identifier that links custom access points to their corresponding park feature.		

*Domain/ field please refer to domain list for all options



Data Request

- Standardize schema (PAD-US)
- Agencies submit & self-attest to meeting criteria
- ~60 of the 100 biggest cities provide updates each year

TPL Staff Verification

- Review access in Google Street View for edge cases
- Auto-calculate access points

Public Verification

- Media of annual ParkScore Index invites public scrutiny
- Published on ParkServe where anybody can review

MAINTAINING DATA IS IMPORTANT (AND HARD)

