With the People: Building Equity and Community Resilience through Engaged Conservation and Placemaking

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Land Trust Alliance Rally
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Taos Land Trust empowers people to protect the land and traditions they love through education, advocacy, and conservation.

Land and Water Connections helps build community resilience through increasing equitable access to nature. We lead community-based planning and action-oriented research.
Building Equity

Opening questions

1. What is your name?
2. Where are you from?
3. What park or open space do you feel most connected to?
4. What brought you to this session?
Learning objectives

1. Create a shared understanding of key terms, including equity
2. Explain the importance of park equity
3. Review best practices in equity-driven engagement for conservation and park planning
4. Introduce toolkit of strategies for community- and data-driven planning to improve equitable access to open space
Workshop outline

1. Introductions and overview
2. Defining terms
3. Why park equity?
4. Equity-driven community engagement
5. Case studies: Taos and Texas
6. Wrap-up and toolkit review
Do you work for a land trust?

- Yes: 84%
- No: 16%

Poll locked. Responses not accepted.
How much does your organization focus on community engagement?

- Not at all: 8%
- A little: 28%
- Quite a bit: 57%
- It's our main focus: 8%
Defining terms
Equality doesn't mean Equity

Credit: Mary Black Foundation
Credit: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation #PromoteHealthEquity
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Equity

• Access to resources needed to thrive

• The work of ending biases and removing the predictability of success or failure that currently correlates with any social or cultural factor

• Considers systemic inequality to provide increased support to those with the fewest resources
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Diversity

• Measure of similarities or differences

• Can refer to many kinds of group identities: racial, ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, age, dis/ability, gender/sexuality, immigration status, language

• Need to understand ways communities are diverse and how the group identities involved affect equity

• Be specific about the type of diversity
Diversity → Inclusion → Equity → Justice
Community resilience

- Ability to withstand and recover from adversity
- To be truly resilient, must include most vulnerable community members
- Adaptation means ability to build back in ways that reduce vulnerability (build back better)
Cycle of Resiliency

Communities faces numerous challenges everyday. The Cycle of Resiliency is a way of illustrating how communities can learn from these challenges, adapt to them, and become stronger over time.

Impact as Opportunity
Although the impact has negative consequences in the short term, it can also provide an opportunity to adapt and chart a new, more resilient course.

Rebuilding to an Adaptive Trajectory
By rebuilding to a more resilient trajectory, a community rebuilds with increased strength, better able to weather the next impact.

Adapting

Cumulative Effects Over Time
Over time, the resiliency gap between those who have adapted and those who have maintained the baseline trajectory grows, as does the difference in community strength between the two paths.

Impact
Rebuilding
Resiliency Gap
Adapting
JUST GETTING BY
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Creative placemaking

Leveraging arts and culture for community-led change that increases vibrancy and builds capacity through:

- Highlighting unique community characteristics
- Connecting with local cultural and natural history
- Encouraging collaboration and visualization
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Park equity
How do parks benefit communities?
Why park equity?

Parks are not optional amenities. They promote:

- **Community health**: physical and mental
- **Environmental health**: clean water and air; protection from climate change and disasters
- **Community cohesion**: traditions, identity
- **Social capital**: trust and civic engagement
- **Economic opportunity**

→ Community resilience
How much does environment matter?

Credit: Parul Pillai, Harris County Department of Public Health
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Learn about park access in your community at parkserve.org
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ParkServe

- Helps identify underserved areas and equity gaps (age, race, income)
- Based on dynamic 10-minute walk standard
- Optimized locations for parks
- Over 14,000 cities and towns
Everyone deserves a park within a 10-minute walk of home.

57% of residents live within a 10 minute walk of a park.

National average: 54%

Where in Raleigh are parks needed most?

Raleigh has 351 parks

We've mapped park access in 14,000 cities and towns across the country. Our free mapping platform helps you pinpoint where to focus park investments in your city.

Explore the Map

RALEIGH PARK AMENITIES COMPARED TO THE 100 LARGEST U.S. CITIES

Basketball Hoops

5.2 per 10,000 people

11% of Raleigh's city land is used for parks and recreation.

National median: 15%
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Community engagement
Talk to a partner:
What engagement challenges has your organization faced?
Group discussion:
Share your challenges.
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Why engage?

• Strategy
• Mission
• Funding
Equity-driven engagement

• Work where lack of parks/conservation contributes to broader disparities
• Involve those who face barriers to participation
• Use process to address broader inequities

(based on TPL approach)
Principles of equity-driven engagement

- Transparency, accountability, empathy, and humility are critical
- Community members are experts on their own needs
- It is our responsibility to identify and reduce barriers to participation
- Acknowledge our own issues with cultural competency and implicit bias
- Share decision-making and leadership
- Process is critical and ongoing
- Need to have (and set) flexible and realistic expectations
- Coalition-building, collaboration, and partnerships are key
- Continually evaluate process and be willing to change course
- Engagement should help empower community members and build community resilience
Avoiding displacement and gentrification

- Need to understand the economic context—especially socioeconomic inequity in housing
- Use community liaisons (and pay them)
- Need short- and long-term housing and economic development strategies
- Land banks and community land trusts can work with and supplement public housing agencies
- Tax relief and rehabilitation assistance for long-time residents
- Assistance for existing small businesses
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Case studies
Community-driven conservation planning:
Taos County Community Conservation Plan
Community-driven conservation planning:

Taos County Community Conservation Plan
“We will continue to take care of our lands, our water, and our people, because without that we aren’t anything.”

Patrick Kopepassah, Taos Pueblo Fire Program Manager
The Place

- 33,000 in Taos County
- Pueblo, Hispano, Hispanic, Anglo
- 56% Hispanic/Latino
- 6% Native American
- Longtime residents and newcomers
- Nearly ¼ below poverty line
- Major health inequities
- Pueblo dates back 1,000 years
- Land grant history and acequias
SOCIOECONOMICS

How are we doing?

2015 Federal Poverty Level:
- $11,770 for a single person
- $15,930 for a 2-person household
- $20,090 for a 3-person household
- $24,250 for a 4-person household

Poverty Rate of the 5512 people living in Taos:
- 1,204 (22%) of them live in poverty.

Of those living in poverty, 364 are under 18 years old.
That’s 38% of all youth in Taos.

Poverty Change Over Time:
- Taos County 1% increase
- Taos 9% decrease
- NM 2.6% increase
- USA 17% increase

Although the poverty rate in Taos is still high, it has been dropping over the past five years while poverty increases elsewhere. The poverty rate in Taos went from 30.9% in 2010 to 21.8% in 2015, a 9% difference.

Unfortunately, poverty in Taos County has been growing at more than twice the rate of New Mexico, and four times faster than nationally.

Median Household Income:
- Taos: $31,112
- New Mexico: $44,963
- USA: $53,389

Incomes in Taos are much lower than in other areas, with Median Household Income 42% lower than the national level.

Who are we? How have we changed?

Population Growth:
- We’re growing steadily...
- 1970-2015

We’re an aging community...
Age Group Change:
- 2000-2015

Racial Makeup:
- We’re diverse, and always changing...

Racial and Ethnic Change, 2010-2015:
- Taos:...
- USA:...

Household Types:
- Our households are largely “non-traditional”...

Median Age:
- Taos...
- New Mexico...
- United States...

Annual data from 2014-2016 are not available and are not included in this data set. American Community Survey, 2010-2014.

Project partners

- Taos Land Trust
- The Trust for Public Land
- Town of Taos
- Taos County
- National Parks Service
- Headwaters Economics
- Enchanted Circle Trails Association
- And over 1,000 community members!
Engagement context

• Cultural divisions
• Tensions between newcomers and longtime residents
• Big economic and health disparities

➢ Skepticism about planning and outsiders
➢ Mostly Anglo participants at meetings
Engagement strategies

- Invest a LOT of time and energy
- Creative speak-out locations
- Focus on underrepresented groups for focus groups and interviews
- Online poll in utility bills
- Weighting poll results
- Engaging UNM Upward Bound students
- Fun community events
- Social media outreach
- Showcase vision for new park
Key findings

• Close-to-home access to open space and trails is critical (access is not equitable now)
• Water quality is top conservation priority—also acequias and traditional agriculture
• Very strong support for expanding trails and trails are already part of daily life for many
• Improving safety is a big priority—especially for in-town walking and biking
• Longtime residents and newcomers often have different priorities
• Need for coordination among municipalities, agencies, community groups, and residents
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Mapping

• Protect water quality and quantity
• Protect cultural resources, including traditional agriculture
• Protect wildlife habitat
• Expand access to recreational opportunities
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Texas case studies
Planning for an equity-first park system after a disaster

Park-Smart Precinct One
Hurricane Harvey

- Over 60 inches of rain
- At least 88 people killed
- 200,000 homes damaged
- $125 billion in damage overall
- Low-lying area with sprawling development and limited planning
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Precinct One

- 1.1 million people (4.5 million in Harris County)
- 375 square miles (more than 1/3 of Rhode Island)
- 39% Hispanic, 38% black
- 23% below poverty level
- 41% of homes owner-occupied
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Park-Smart Precinct One

- Partnership of Precinct One, The Trust for Public Land, Houston Parks Board, and Asakura Robinson
- $500,000 grant from Houston Endowment and $49,000 from Precinct
- Started 1 month before Hurricane Harvey
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Goal

Determine the most equitable and strategic ways to:

Build community resilience by expanding access to all the benefits of close-to-home parks and trails

→ Improve community health
→ Build stronger social ties
→ Meet environmental challenges
Engagement

- 30+ steering committee; 50+ technical advisory team
- 1,097 responses to online survey
- Hundreds reached through 12 workshops
- 501 reached through phone poll
- Thousands reached through 24 speak-outs
- 50 interviews
- Community trails app
- Focus group for people with disabilities
- Youth-focused collaboration with SCA and Workshop Houston
- Student-led assessments of 21 high-need parks
- Arts-focused workshop
- Flooding storytelling event and story map
Not feeling safe is the biggest barrier to using parks.
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Protecting land to prevent flooding is the highest spending priority (94% said most or very important)
Public art, cultural programming, and natural features can make parks more welcoming.
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Mapping and data-driven decision making

- Socioeconomic vulnerability
- Health inequity
- Urban heat islands/air quality
- Flooding/water quality
- Park access
- Trails and active transit access

→ Priority-setting
→ Funding
→ Democratizing data
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Using parks and health to bring together a changing city

Pasadena Healthy Parks Plan
What does a healthy community look like?
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Pasadena, Texas

- Bordered by shipping channel and petrochemical companies
- Previously very Anglo, now nearly 70% Hispanic
- Nearly 30% under age 18
- 50% of households earn under $50,000/year
- Nearly 29% over age 25 have no high school degree
- Pasadena ISD: 92% students of color, 80% qualify for free/reduced cost lunch
- Just under 54% of residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park

Socioeconomic challenges are closely linked to poor health outcomes.
Pasadena Healthy Parks Plan

• Core team: City of Pasadena, Houston Parks Board, Asakura Robinson, and Land and Water Connections Consulting

• Funded by grants from Houston Endowment and Pasadena Vibrant Community (MD Anderson)

• Many public health sector partners
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Project goal

Ensure that Pasadena thrives through making its parks healthy, welcoming, and accessible to all

(Identify the highest priority investments to do this)
Healthy Parks Plan process
Community involvement

- Polling, speak-outs, workshops
- Interviews/focus groups
- Advisory committee
- Core team
Bilingual engagement activities

- Speak-outs and intercept surveys (15+) at community events (Mexican wrestling, senior “Grease Lightning” dance)
- Interviews and focus groups
- Community workshops (with food and activities for kids)
- Online survey (in utility bills) and telephone poll

➢ Key partner: school district
➢ 730 reached through events
➢ Over 1,000 reached through survey
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Preliminary engagement results

• Residents visit parks frequently, but there are a lot of opportunities to make parks more accessible and welcoming (especially increasing comfort features: restrooms and drinking fountains).

• Spending time with friends and family is the most common reason for using parks (especially for Hispanic residents).

• Promoting health and connecting to nature are major priorities.

• The vast majority drive to parks now, but nearly half would like to use alternatives, especially walking.

• Residents are very concerned about park safety.
Building equity

Mapping Process

Step 1: Multiple datasets are “stacked” within each index.
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Mapping Process

Step 2: The four index maps will be “stacked” again.
Socioeconomic Vulnerability-Weighted

- Low Income Households
- People of Color
- Linguistic Isolation
- Disabled Population
- Households without Cars
- Population under 5
- Population over 64
- Foreign Born
- Crime Statistics
- Homeownership
- Single Parent Households
- Disconnected Youth
Community Health-Weighted

- Asthma
- High blood pressure
- Cancer
- High Cholesterol
- Kidney Disease
- COPD
- Heart Disease
- Diabetes
- Mental Health
- Stroke
- Health Insurance
- Binge Drinking
- Current Smoking
- Obesity
- Sleep <7 hours
- Food Access
- Vacant lot density
- Heat Exposure
- Air Quality
Environmental Vulnerability-Weighted

- Flood Zone
- Wetlands
- Streams and Bayous
- Truck Routes
- Highways
- Industrial Facilities
- Erosion Potential
- Poor Water Quality
- Superfund Sites
- Heat Island
- Tree Canopy Gaps
- Habitat Map
- Soil Contamination
- Light Pollution
- Sea Level
- Species Richness
Environmental Risk-Weighted

- Flood
- Trucks
- Highways
- Erosion Potential
- Superfund Sites
- Urban Heat Island
- Soil Contamination
- Sea Level Rise
- Air Quality
- Industrial Facilities
Design Guidelines

**Mental Health Toolkit**

**Benefits**
- Decreases Stress Levels

*Time spent in nature, especially in “blue spaces” like ponds, lakes, streams, and fountains, have been shown to decrease stress levels.*

*Cost: $$$*

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**Water Features**

**Benefits**
- Eases Asthma
- Prevents Heat-Related Illnesses

*Asthma is the most common chronic disease in the United States, and it is often exacerbated by air pollution, which worsens as air temperatures increase. Trees both improve local air quality and provide cooling effects through shading and evapotranspiration.*

*Cost: $*

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**Environmental Health Toolkit**
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Path to implementation

• Local partners need to be involved from the beginning
• Ensure that recommendations truly reflect community needs
• Democratizing data is powerful—others can implement too
• Good planning helps leverage public and private funding
This is Your Park: Equity-focused planning for the Rio Fernando Park
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Taos Land Trust’s commitment to community conservation
The Romo Property
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The site
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The planning process

• Built on previous planning (esp. Community Conservation Plan)
• 18 community meetings
• 24-member steering committee
• 650 people surveyed
• 26 people interviewed
• 10 experts/consultants
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The people
The parties
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The plan

Site Plan

mate 1

August 2018
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Placemaking with art

[Images of children engaging in creative activities]
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Placemaking with nature
Wrap-up and toolkit for engagement
Group discussion:
What engagement strategies have you used?
Before you begin

• Take a look inside your own organization for issues with equity, inclusion, and bias
• Understand local demographics and focus on specific types of diversity
  - Who is underserved and underrepresented?
  - Who has felt excluded in the past?
  - Who will be opposed?
• Think through your principles and your priorities
• Don’t underestimate time and cost

Trust is difficult to build and easy to lose
Engagement toolkit, part 1

• Keep meetings short and provide food and childcare if possible
• Use a variety of approaches—not just meetings
  - Interviews
  - Focus groups
  - Speak-outs and intercept surveys
  - Online/paper surveys (weight results)
  - Professional polling (demographically representative)
Engagement toolkit, part 2

- Use creative locations for outreach (go to where people are)
- Translate materials, use translators/language justice advocates for outreach
- Pay community organizers and other local workers
- Arts and cultural engagement
Engagement toolkit, part 3

- Involve young people in the process—surveys, interviews, groundtruthing
- Provide fun activities for kids so caregivers can participate
- Engage through community-generated data
- Social media outreach—and old-fashioned mailers and flyers + radio
- Celebrate and make events fun
Resources

• ParkServe.org
• 10-minute walk learning series www.nrpa.org/10minutewalk
• Taos Community Conservation Plan web.tplgis.org/taos_ccp/
• RioFernandoPark.org
• www.pasadenahealthyparks.com
• www.polleverywhere.com
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