

# Park Equity Accelerator Application

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Over 100 million people in the U.S, including 28 million children, do not have access to a quality park within a 10-minute walk of home. Trust for Public Land's (TPL) 10-Minute Walk Program works with mayors and other city leaders to advance park equity. We identify, test, and share high-impact policies and advanced practices that narrow the park equity divide.

Policy and practice can accelerate and sustain a city's work to close the park equity divide. However, cities lack a clear road map of these systems-level interventions. The 10-Minute Walk Park Equity Accelerator (PEA) provides focused resources and technical assistance, partnership, and education to help cities move the needle on park equity. These focused, local engagements field-test policy ideas, gather real-world insights on the process of change, and gather learnings that can be scaled to benefit other communities.

The goals of the Park Equity Accelerator are:

1. Increase park equity in local communities by developing and advancing policy and systems-change interventions.
2. Strengthen the way in which local priorities, equity, and the community is centered in local policy making related to parks and greenspaces.
3. Bring park equity to scale by sharing policy models, case studies, and other insights with communities across the country.

TPL, in partnership with participating cities, will work together to establish a scope of work for each Accelerator engagement. Activities supported and/or available to participating cities include, but are not limited to:

- Research and analysis to identify, analyze, and evaluate different policy options that could help to increase park equity.
- Benchmarking and best practice recommendations and co-creation of customized solutions.
- Planning support, such as park conditions assessments, surveying, and GIS/mapping to support implementation.
- Deep dive exploration and recommendations from subject matter experts around cross-sector community development and policy issues.
- Community engagement and relationship building support.
- In addition to this technical support, the PEAs will benefit from a cohort learning model, coming together throughout the program to learn from one another as well as subject matter experts.

If you have any questions, please contact Sam Savin or Sophie Neuhaus.

## **Program Details**

### **Eligibility**

A goal of the Park Equity Accelerator is to build park equity through changing local policy. To that end, the lead applicant for Accelerator projects must be a local government. Cross-sector partnerships play an important role in policy change, and we encourage applicants to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders to support projects. The broader representation of a project team can be reflected in the “Roles and Personnel” section of this application.

### **Areas of Focus**

For the Accelerator cohort, we are prioritizing projects that address one of four areas of focus:

#### **1. Increasing funding, resources, and sustainability of parks systems**

*Example areas of focus:*

- How can local park funding overall be increased and improve the staying power of parks (e.g., maintenance, operation, stewardship, programming, etc.)?
- How can budgets and spending (resource allocation) support community priorities, benefits, and park equity?

*Example policies to target:*

- Public finance policies
- Budget policies
- Maintenance funding and models

#### **2. Ensuring park equity across markets and city typologies**

*Example areas of focus:*

- How can cities ensure park access in growing or evolving cities?
- How can cities invest in parks, as part of broader equitable development strategies?
- How can public-private partnerships be leveraged to support parks while advancing equity goals?

*Example policies to target:*

- Development fees, open space requirements, land use dedications
- Land use policy and zoning

#### **3. Leveraging non-traditional lands to increase park access**

*Example areas of focus:*

- What policies and practices can be used to “unlock” and sustain “non-traditional land” to be used as parks? For example, “non-traditional lands” can include utility lands,

libraries, cemeteries, vacant land, schools, and under-utilized public land, in closing park access gaps?

*Example policies to target:*

- Shared use policies
- Connectivity policies

#### **4. Maximizing the role of parks in providing multiple community benefits.**

*Example areas of focus:*

- How can cities create parks that generate value for local communities?
- How can cities increase park equity and create new parks, while minimizing negative externalities?
- What policies help maximize benefits of parks for climate, health, community, and equity goals?

*Example policies to target:*

- Value capture & public benefit contribution incentive programs
- Anti-displacement and housing-related policy and practice

We will also consider any compelling ideas from cities that fall outside of these four project areas and that could increase park equity through policy change.

#### **Requirements, Reporting, and Restrictions for Selected Applicants**

- Secure a signed letter from your Mayor or highest-ranking government official agreeing to join the Accelerator cohort.
- Secure sign-on to the 10-Minute Walk program from your mayor or highest-ranking government official (if not already a program participant).
- Partner with TPL to complete an Accelerator project over the course of 12 months. The project should help your city use policy and practice to increase park equity.
- Join an in-person meeting of all cohort participants.
- Join ongoing virtual meetings and trainings of the PEA cohort.
- Write a short update blog to be shared online and with 10-Minute Walk's audience.
- Write a case study that includes photos of your project work at the conclusion of the Accelerator to be shared externally.
- This is not a re-grant program. Selected applicants will be required to set in place a close, collaborative working relationship with TPL through which TPL will provide research, analysis, and technical assistance to help cities make policy change. TPL will also be able to provide support for contracts with external experts and community leaders who can help to advance policy change.

## Application

1. What city do you represent?

City of New Haven, Connecticut.

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2. What's your name?

Stephen T. Hladun

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3. What's your title?

Deputy Director of Operations, Parks Dept.

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4. What's your email?

shladun@newhavenct.gov

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5. We are planning to investigate and advance specific policy and practices that accelerate park equity. Please select below which topic you'd like to investigate. Projects can address multiple topics, and there can be multiple projects selected for each topic and question.

*Check all that apply.*

- ☒ Increasing the resources and sustainability of parks systems (e.g., public finance policies, budget or capital improvement policies, maintenance funding and models)
- ☒ Ensuring park equity across markets and city typologies (e.g., development related fees or open space requirements, land use dedications, land use policy and zoning)
- ☐ Leveraging non-traditional lands to increase park access (e.g., shared use policies - especially working across sectors and departments such as utilities, connectivity policies)
- ☒ Maximizing the role of parks in providing multiple community benefits (e.g., community engagement, value capture & public benefit incentive programs, anti-displacement and housing related policy and practice)

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. What specific policy or practice in your city would your project affect?

The Park Equity Accelerator Program would affect the Parks Department's overall ability to generate an overall strategy for park improvements, funding, maintenance, public engagement, public/private partnerships. The project would also effect planning & implementation goals and objectives both within the Parks Department and in concert with various partner organizations and community groups.

7. Describe your city's current 10-minute walk/park equity challenges. What is the status of the project you've proposed? Is this something that is already underway to which TPL would lend additional capacity? Is this a new project that TPL would enable?

The City is blessed with an extensive park system with a variety of features. The challenge for the Parks Department and City is to make long term improvements with limited resources as well as to create capacity to execute those projects and maintain them for the future. Equity across all parks in terms of infrastructure, improvements, investment, and overall maintenance is an ongoing challenge. TPL would lend additional capacity.

8. Please provide a brief description (no more than 500 words) of the project you'd propose under-taking for your Accelerator.

The project would pick up where several recent work left off with new initiatives that could set the stage for greater success in implementation. The studies and initiatives I am referring to are the following: Trust for Public Land New Haven Park Score Index, September, 2021 and Re-envisioning New Haven Parks Report, January 15, 2024.

9. What project personnel from your city would lead this effort?

Parks Department Staff as well as all other departments and identified community

lead organizations that are available to participate as needed in the effort.

Stephen T. Hladun, Deputy Director of Operations, Joshua Price, Chief Landscape

Architect, Rebecca Bombero, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer.

10. Who are your key community partners for this project?

Urban Resources Initiative, Over 30 Park Friends group organizations.

11. What stakeholders would you propose engaging in this project?

Local Schools and Educational Institutions such as Universities and Colleges

Neighborhood & community groups & organizations. Parks Commission.

12. Has your city worked with TPL in the past? If so, please provide a brief description of the work.

Yes, for park development initiatives as well as the Park Score Index.

13. How would your project increase park equity in your city?

The project would increase park equity in New Haven by creating a road map to

achieve greater improvements to parks on a wider scale and allow better access to higher quality parks once implemented. The Park Equity Accelerator

would be looked at to be a "force multiplier" in terms of providing the City the tools, strategies and resources to plan and execute projects and more sustainable improvements through innovation and best practice models from other cities.

14. What evidence shows your city is already working on and committed to promoting park equity?

The City is focused on restoring many parks and facilities to provide increased

program offerings as well as improved services across a range of neighborhoods.

This includes initiatives already underway at several community centers in

parks and at parks.

15. In early 2025, we will host an in-person event with the full cohort – potentially in a participating city. Would your city be willing to host the event? This would include partnering with TPL to coordinate site visits, identify lodging and restaurants, etc. Your response to this answer will not affect your overall application status.

*Mark only one oval.*

☒ Yes

☐ No

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

16. Is there anything else you think we should know about your proposed project?

The proposed project for the City of New Haven has been presented to the

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Parks Commission on September 18, 2024 and is in the process of being presented to the City of New Haven Board of Alders. The Parks Department appears to be at a pivotal moment where there is much room for growth and improvement however at the core of its challenges is a need to accelerate equity and gather

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resources, capacity building, bandwidth and support to champion a vision for the

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Park system in the Elm City for the next several decades/generations.

The energy and momentum is at a critical turning point and therefore everyone's effort who participates in the program is greatly appreciated and will hopefully yield outstanding and rewarding results for all!

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