



LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY
LOUISVILLE METRO BOARD OF HEALTH

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December 5, 2022

Public Policy Statement: Investing in Public Parks and Greenspace, Letter of Support for R-189-22

The Louisville Metro Board of Health supports further city investment in public parks with the intended purpose of ensuring all residents can experience the positive health outcomes and quality of life that are associated with access to greenspace. **We urge the current and future administrations to invest in improving the quality and accessibility of Louisville's public parks and greenspace, through Resolution 189-22 implementing the Parks for All Action Plan Recommendations, to promote better health and quality of life for all Louisville residents.**

Research demonstrates there are **numerous health benefits** associated with access to greenspace, including lower heart rates, decreased mortality, reduced violence, improved mental health, reduced depression, and a higher likelihood of physical activity. More greenspace and tree coverage also improves the air quality, which reduces the prevalence of certain negative health effects, such as asthma. Many cities have seen positive outcomes from further investment in parks. For example, Boston, Cincinnati, and Pittsburgh all have park accessibility rates that are far above the national average. This body of evidence shows that further investment in parks and greenspace has the ability to substantially improve the way communities experience certain health outcomes.

Trust for Public Land reports that Louisville's government spends significantly less on its parks than other cities at about \$52 per capita, which is below the national average of \$83 per capita. Louisville's parks also rank low in accessibility, with only 39% of Louisville residents living within a 10-minute walk of a park. The residents in the city that are most impacted by lack of investment and inaccessibility are Black and low-income communities. This is consistent with research compiled by CityHealth that shows neighborhoods that have been historically disinvested in through the racist practice of redlining have less access to parks and greenspace. Data from Trust for Public Land reveals that mostly White neighborhoods in Louisville have 206% more park space than the city's median per person, whereas predominantly Black neighborhoods have 6% less park space than the city's median per person.

Approaching Louisville's budget with an **intentional investment in improvement and expansion of the city's public parks can ensure that the benefits of greenspace to community health and wellbeing are available to all residents instead of just a select few.**

CityHealth has put forth several policy recommendations to improve access to greenspace, which includes policies that ensure residents are within a 10-minute walk to a park, specific tree canopy goals, and increasing investment in parks to match the national average of expenditures. Local organizations have also initiated policies and programs to address park accessibility in the city. In collaboration with community partners, the Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness identified community driven interventions for environmental equity as a key priority in their community health improvement plan, Healthy Louisville 2025. The West Louisville Outdoor Recreation Initiative creates parks and infrastructure and expands access to nature and greenspace for youth in areas with least access to parks and greenspace.

Most recently, the Parks Alliance of Louisville conducted an assessment, combining data on our parks, community data including health indicators, and public input via surveys to understand which parks are most in need of maintenance, and which communities need the most investment. We appreciate their use of data and community input in the process of building a roadmap for equitable investment in parks. **We support the implementation of the Parks for All Action Plan Recommendations and urge Council's commitment to increasing funding of parks over the next 15 years.**



Heidi Margulis
Chair-Louisville Metro Board of Health