



The Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership

A **SMART INVESTMENT** FOR AMERICA'S HEALTH, ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT





INTRODUCTION

The Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) program, established in 2014, provides grants to cities for park projects in underserved communities. Managed by the National Park Service (NPS) and funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), the nationally competitive program provides matching grants to assist economically disadvantaged communities with little to no access to outdoor recreation opportunities in urban areas. Funds can be used for the acquisition and/or development of, or to substantially renovate public parks and other outdoor recreation spaces.

City parks play a vital role in the social, economic, and physical well-being of America's cities and their residents. They provide access to recreational opportunities, alleviate mental stress, spur local economies, and protect cities from environmental impacts.

However, more than 100 million people in the U.S., including 28 million children, do not have a quality park or green space within a half mile from their home.¹ And historic disinvestment has left many low-income communities and communities of color without access to quality parks and recreation

opportunities, and with park assets in need of significant upgrades.

Health Benefits

Residents with safe, accessible parks are more likely to exercise regularly, and as a result have increased rates of overall health,² including lower rates of obesity, Type 2 diabetes,³ and heart disease.⁴ And residents within a short walking distance of a safe park are significantly less likely to suffer from stress, anxiety or depression than residents further from a park.⁵ Research also shows that time spent in parks reduces attention deficits in children and the effects of a walk in a park are even similar to the effects of common ADHD medication.⁶

Environmental Benefits

Parks provide enormous green infrastructure benefits. Low-income communities, which have fewer trees and parks and more paved surfaces, are often hit hardest by the impact of climate change, such as flooding, extreme heat and reduced air quality. Parks and green spaces absorb carbon and clean the air, soak up and slow stormwater, limiting the severity of flooding, and make cities cooler. All of these provide cost savings for cities and help underserved communities who bear the brunt of climate change the most.

Economic Benefits

Parks also provide tremendous economic benefits. Parks create jobs and generate economic activity. In one year alone, local parks supported more than 1.1 million jobs⁷ and generated \$166 billion in economic activity.⁸ Parks also increase property tax revenue for cities.⁹

A Smart Investment

Despite the enormous economic, physical, mental, and environmental benefits and cost savings that parks provide, public funding for parks—especially in distressed communities where their multiple benefits are most needed—is limited and not keeping up with demand.

The ORLP has been a critical tool in helping to address these challenges. Cities have used the ORLP to create close-to-home parks and revitalize run-down parks in historically park-poor neighborhoods where safe access to parks and recreation is critically needed. The ORLP has become an important funding tool for cities in supporting strong, healthy communities across America.



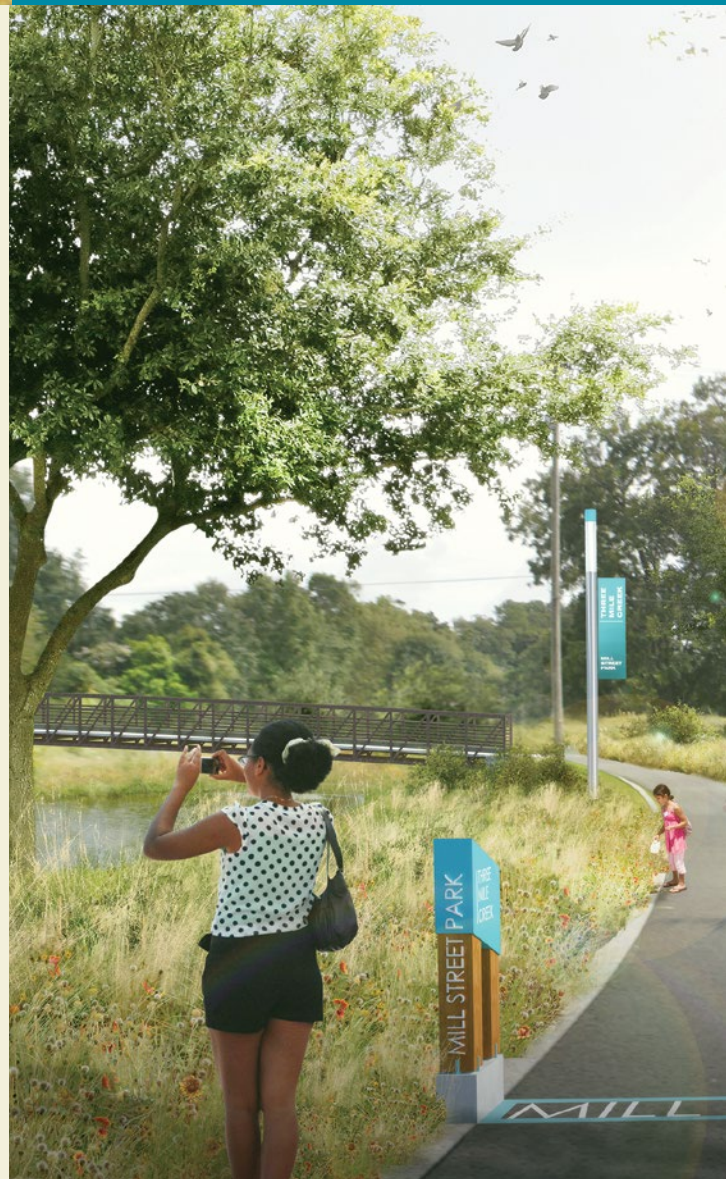
ORLP'S CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICAN CITIES

**THE OUTDOOR RECREATION
LEGACY PARTNERSHIP
OFFERS CRITICAL FUNDING
THAT CITIES CAN LEVERAGE TO
ATTRACT THE PUBLIC
AND PRIVATE PARK
INVESTMENTS NEEDED
TO SUPPORT STRONG,
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
ACROSS AMERICA.**

MOBILE, AL

Three Mile Creek Greenway

Initiated by a 2015 grant from the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership, the City of Mobile, AL is transforming Three Mile Creek—once the city's drinking water source but more recently a degraded urban stormwater conveyance—into part of a larger 18+-mile greenway system that will reconnect diverse neighborhoods and provide much-needed outdoor recreation options for its 195,000 citizens. The city and its partners, the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program and Mobile Area Water and Sewer System, are cleaning the waterway, restoring natural stream channels, and planting trees to manage stormwater and improve biodiversity while preventing flooding. By connecting neighborhoods to parks and commercial districts and providing a fitness circuit and parcourse, the greenway will increase physical activity for the 70,000 Mobilians who live within a mile of the Three Mile Creek Greenway Trail, 40 percent of whom don't meet recommended levels of physical activity.





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Ben Brink and Portland Parks & Recreation

ANCHORAGE, AK

The Municipality of Anchorage, Anchorage Park Foundation, and residents of the Muldoon neighborhood have worked together to turn what was once an abandoned lot into a lively, community space—Chanshtnu Muldoon Park.

An initial \$750,000 grant from the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership enabled the partners to raise an additional \$1.2 million from municipal bonds and private funds. The first phase of the park includes an ice-skating loop, inclusive playground, restored natural areas, and trails built by the Youth Employment in Parks program, where teens gain job skills while learning about environmental stewardship.¹⁰

The second phase includes a bike park and dog park, as well as a large community garden with 45 garden plots and a food forest with more than 100 Alaskan fruit trees and thousands of berry bushes and edible plants that will produce up to 10,000 lbs. of food. The community gardens and food forest create an opportunity for community members to enjoy low-cost, locally grown, healthy food, as well as learn about gardening, agriculture, and forestry.¹¹

DENVER, CO

The City and County of Denver, along with its partners, created Montbello Open Space Park in one of the most densely populated and diverse neighborhoods in Denver, with more than 36,000 residents underserved by parks.¹² Funding included a \$250,000 grant from the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership.

The partners have transformed 5.5 acres from a vacant lot into a restored short-grass prairie ecosystem with native plants and green infrastructure to manage stormwater. The new park includes sports fields and courts, walking trails, and a new playground with interactive nature play spaces.¹³

Separate from the scope of the ORLP grant, the park also houses Environmental Learning for Kids' (ELK) nature education center with outdoor classrooms, science stations, and interpretive signs. ELK provides recreation and programs for youth who may otherwise not have the opportunity to engage in science and science-related careers.¹⁴

PORTLAND, OR

Cully Park stands on 25 acres that was once a landfill. Located in a diverse, park-deficient neighborhood, the park has helped to build the environmental, economic, and physical health of the community.

Portland Parks and Recreation manages Cully Park, the product of a unique and strong partnership with the Let Us Build Cully Park coalition, led by the nonprofit Verde. The partners raised more than \$13 million to build the park, \$500,000 of which came from the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership. Residents were not only involved in planning the park, but local tradespeople and workers were hired to build the park, ensuring economic benefits went directly to the community.

Cully Park features a community garden where residents can grow their own produce, sports fields, a large playground with water play facilities, restored habitat, and a Native Gathering Garden, designed in partnership with the local Native American community. Cully Park is a catalyst for neighborhood improvement.¹⁵



MAYORS PRAISE ORLP

Mayor Joseph Peter Ganim of Bridgeport, Connecticut

"Parks in the City of Bridgeport provide a major haven for healthy, outdoor fun. With a \$375,000 ORLP grant, the City of Bridgeport leveraged private partners to transform Johnson Oak Park and the grounds of the Jettie S. Tisdale School in the East End, a predominantly minority and low-income neighborhood of the city. The park now includes playing fields, a playground, a spray pad, and a fitness exercise area. We are thankful for the ORLP program for helping us improve our residents' quality of life."

Mayor Michael B. Hancock of Denver, Colorado

"Denver's ever-expanding acres of parks, trails, and natural spaces demonstrate our commitment to equity, health, and well-being. Never before was that more evident than during the pandemic, as record numbers of grateful residents delighted in these outdoor spaces during uncertain and challenging times. Investments by the LWCF's ORLP program helps us expand access to Denver's parks, especially for those in our most vulnerable neighborhoods."

Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway of Madison, Wisconsin

"Federal support such as the LWCF grant is essential to improving Madison's 6,000-acre park system and serving the full diversity of Madison residents. The Skatepark at McPike (formerly Central) Park is a great example. The LWCF's ORLP program helped us create a skating experience that is safe, free, and appropriate for all skill levels. It's wonderful to see the diversity of folks who use the park and the community they create there. McPike Park transformed a former industrial site into a vibrant regional attraction, and the skatepark has been critical to that revitalization."



CONCLUSION: ORLP IS A SMART INVESTMENT

Parks and green spaces are essential to the physical, mental, and environmental health of communities. Safe, accessible parks offer opportunities for residents to be physically active and experience the restorative power of nature. Increased physical activity can help prevent and manage serious health conditions, and access to nature reduces stress and improves mental health. Trees and plants clean and cool the air, absorb stormwater, and prevent flooding, mitigating climate change and improving community resilience.

Unfortunately, more than 100 million Americans, particularly low-income people of color, lack access to safe parks or natural areas and, as a result, suffer from higher rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and mental health disorders. The lack of green spaces also makes their communities more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund's Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership grant program is a smart investment for America's health.



ENDNOTES

- 1 10 Minute Walk Campaign, <https://10minutewalk.org/#Our-research>
- 2 Pitas NAD and Barrett AG, et al, The Relationship Between Self-Rated Health and Use of Parks and Participation in Recreation Programs, United States, 1991–2015, CDC Research Brief, Preventing Chronic Disease, Vol 14, January 5, 2017.
- 3 Christine P, University of Michigan School of Public Health, *Bridging the Gap: Biologic, Behavioral, and Environmental Contributions to the Development of Type 2 Diabetes*, JAMA Internal Medicine, June 29, 2015.
- 4 Barrett, Meredith A., et.al. *Parks and Health: Aligning Incentives to Create Innovations in Chronic Disease Prevention*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 17, 2014.
- 5 Orstad SL and Szuhany K, et al, *Park Proximity and Use for Physical Activity among Urban Residents: Associations with Mental Health*, 2020, International Journal for Environmental Research and Public Health, July 2020, 17(13):4885.
- 6 Taylor AF and Kuo FE, *Children with Attention Deficits Concentrate Better After a Walk in the Park*, Journal of Attention Disorders, March 2009, 12(5):402–9.
- 7 *The Economic Impact of Parks: An Examination of the Economic Impacts of Operations and Capital Spending by Local Park and Recreation Agencies on the U.S. Economy*, National Recreation and Park Association, Source: IMPLAN, Center for Regional Analysis—George Mason University, 2020.
- 8 *The Economic Impact of Parks: An Examination of the Economic Impacts of Operations and Capital Spending by Local Park and Recreation Agencies on the U.S. Economy*, National Recreation and Park Association, Source: IMPLAN, Center for Regional Analysis—George Mason University, 2020.
- 9 Crompton J, *How Much Impact Do Parks Have on Property Values*, Parks and Recreation Magazine, March 26, 2020.
- 10 *Chanshtnu Muldoon Park Master Plan*, Municipality of Anchorage, April 2016.
- 11 *Chanshtnu Muldoon Park: Phase 2 Development*, Municipality of Anchorage, 2018.
- 12 *Denver Metro Data*, Shift Research Lab, A Program of the Piton Foundation, 2017.
- 13 Fisher A, *Denver's Montbello Open Space Park Officially Opens*, Patch Community Corner, June 10, 2021.
- 14 *Montbello Open Space*, The Trust for Public Land, 2021.
- 15 Data provided by Portland Parks and Recreation Department staff.



Entities interested in seeking **funding under the ORLP program** should contact their **state lead agency** to get details about their state's process for selecting and nominating projects to the National Park Service's national competition.

Don't know your state lead? Email NPS at ORLP_inquiries@nps.gov

As the only **federal program** focused exclusively on supporting parks and outdoor recreation opportunities in cities, **the ORLP provides critical funding to cities to create new or restore existing parks, trails, and recreation areas in communities in need.**



CITY PARKS ALLIANCE

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City Parks Alliance is the only independent, nationwide membership organization solely dedicated to urban parks. The mission of City Parks Alliance is to engage, educate, and nurture a broad-based constituency to support the creation, revitalization, and sustainability of parks and green spaces that contribute to more vibrant and equitable cities.

The Mayors for Parks Coalition, a project of City Parks Alliance, is a national bipartisan coalition of mayors from cities large and small across America that advocates for increased federal investment for our nation's city parks.