SACRAMENTO COUNTY

PARK ACCESS POLICY REPORT

SACRAMENTO COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH
Promote • Prevent • Protect

WALKSACRAMENTO

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INTRODUCTION

WALKSacramento conducted a policy scan of regional, local, and park district policies that currently exist relating to park access. This scan surveyed the existing policy landscape in the Sacramento Region and was used to identify current policy gaps relating to park access. While the recommendations are directed at current policy gaps in the Sacramento Region, the best practices and general recommendations are universally applicable. The recommendations include specific examples from other jurisdictions, references from comprehensive agency reports, and general best practices to improve park access for urban and neighborhood parks. Policy recommendations are guided by broad park access policy goals and are intended for decision-makers to guide policy development with the intention of improving park access.

Physical activity is one of the contributing factors in chronic disease prevention and intervention. Parks play a critical role in improving chronic health outcomes in communities by providing opportunities for play and exercise for people of all ages and abilities. Additionally, people are more likely to use a park if they are able to get there within a 10-minute walk, creating additional health benefits from physical activity. However, communities in Sacramento that are most vulnerable to poor health outcomes often do not have safe or convenient access to parks, contributing to health disparities. Policy drives built environment change, and as such it is critical that policies address park access through a health equity lens.

HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

This report is designed for decision makers at the local government, regional government, and park district levels to improve park access and public health through public policy. This report analyzes existing policies in the Sacramento Region and recommends new or strengthened policies based on a literature review of best practices. Recommendations are targeted towards different jurisdictional levels and planning documents.

Regional Government

Regional agencies fund transportation improvements and establish regionally consistent transportation, land use, and open space policies. Recommendations geared toward regional government includes innovative funding policy and high-level, regional strategies for trail systems planning and pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to parks.

Local Government

Local jurisdictions such as cities and counties set policies through General and Master Plans, develop and maintain parks and programs, and manage funding for infrastructure projects. This report identifies active transportation policies, park development standards, guidelines for funding local projects, and other strategies for local governments to improve access to parks.

Park Districts

Park districts are special districts that manage park development, site maintenance, programs, and other daily park administration. Due to the granularity of Park Master Plans, park districts have an opportunity to significantly influence the experience of park users. This report provides park districts with specific infrastructure and non-infrastructure policy recommendations to create equitable and sustainable park access.

PARK ACCESS POLICY IN THE SACRAMENTO REGION

Currently, regional and local policies prioritize general access and connectivity between neighborhoods and have a dedication to sustainable forms of transportation. However, while there is a commitment to sustainable transportation, there is a lack of policies detailing specific funding and implementation strategies including CPTED, data fueled project development, and providing equitable park access for vulnerable road users. This report highlights how existing policies can be strengthened to create equitable access to parks and offers recommendations for new policies based on national best practices to make walking, biking and physical access to parks a priority.

KEY PLANNING DOCUMENTS

The most relevant park access policies are found within general plans and master plans. It is important to have a balance of high level policies that show a dedication to park access in combination with more specific operational policies.

General Plans

General Plans provide policy language intended to meet the broad goals of future development and act as guiding principles for more specific plans. A strong and comprehensive General Plan establishes the priorities and policy goals of the jurisdiction. Park access policies appear in key elements of the General Plan that pertain to circulation (transportation), public facilities, and land use.
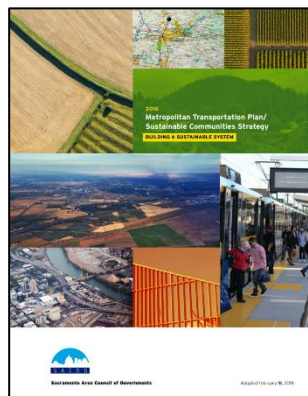
Master Plans

Master Plans are documents that address a specific discipline or area such as a Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan, Park Master Plan or a Downtown Master Plan. These documents provide greater specificity and implementation for development. Park Master Plans often address important elements of safety, programming, and education that would be too specific to be included in a General Plan element. In addition, Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans are able to prioritize specific corridors and identify specific policies that aim to improve active transportation.

The following policy documents were reviewed:

## Sacramento Area Council of Governments

Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (MTP/SCS)

The MTP/SCS provides high level, regional guidance to improve quality of life based on projected land use patterns and population growth. The MTP/SCS analyzes current transportation and land use trends and identifies guiding principles and strategies, including smart land use, environmental sustainability, and access and mobility. Public health, air quality, and promotion of active transportation are highlighted as key policy goals.

### Regional Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trails Master Plan

The Regional Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trails Master Plan envisions a complete transportation system for the region that supports healthy living and active communities. The plan identifies a series of goals, strategies, and actions to improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, increase travel by active modes, and implement regional priorities consistent with the MTP/SCS.
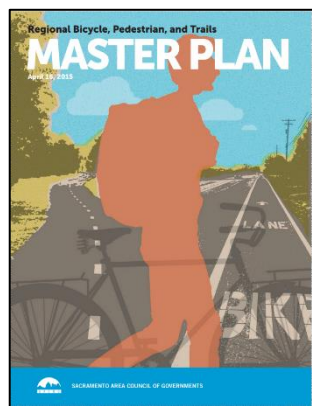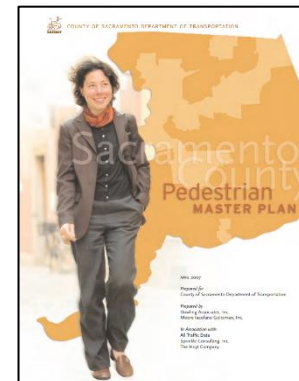
Sacramento County

2030 General Plan

The Sacramento County 2030 General Plan identifies policies and programs for guiding development patterns in the unincorporated County. Elements pertaining to park access and active transportation include Land Use, Circulation, Open Space, and Public Facilities. Some of the key goals of the General Plan are environmental sustainability, economic development, infill development, an integrated transportation system, and healthy communities.
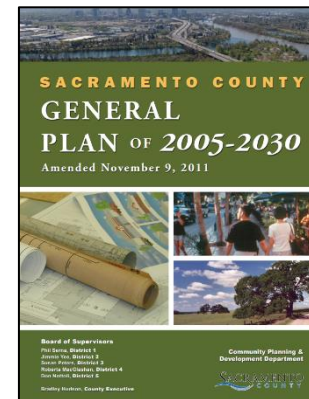
Pedestrian Master Plan

The Sacramento County Pedestrian Master Plan aims to improve pedestrian safety and access throughout the unincorporated County. The Pedestrian Master Plan outlines policies to improve pedestrian safety, increase access, and improve comfort and convenience through streetscape design and land use.

Bicycle Master Plan

The Sacramento County Bicycle Master Plan guides bikeway policies, programs, and development standards and complements the Circulation Element of the General Plan. Policies and strategies aim to increase bike modeshare and reduce bike collisions and injuries.

City of Sacramento

2035 General Plan

The City of Sacramento General Plan sets overarching goals and policies to develop a livable city. Key themes of the General Plan include smart growth, placemaking, economic vitality, healthy communities, and sustainability. Elements pertaining to park access and active transportation include Land Use and Urban Design, Mobility, and Education, Recreation, and Culture.
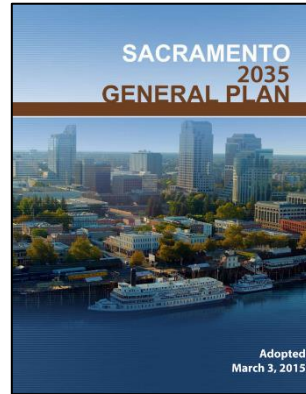
Pedestrian Master Plan

The City Pedestrian Master Plan provides a comprehensive vision for improving pedestrian conditions. The Master Plan highlights the importance of pedestrian-oriented development and recommends updating development review guidelines to better address pedestrian-friendliness in new development projects. Goals include improving pedestrian education, creating walkable environments, and increasing safety.
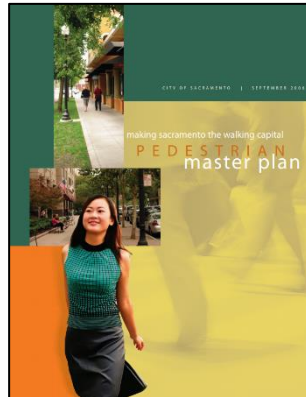
Bicycle Master Plan

The City Bicycle Master Plan supports the 2035 General Plan goals of reducing vehicle miles traveled, reducing climate emissions, and improving overall quality of life. The goals of the Master Plan are to increase bike modeshare, improve safety and connectivity, and equitably invest in bike facilities and programs throughout the city.
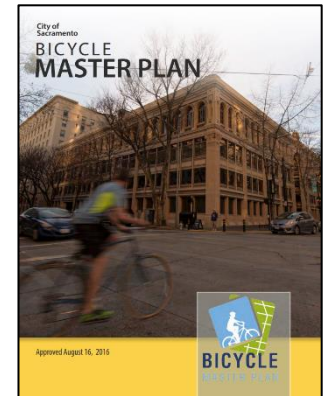
Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The City Parks and Recreation Master Plan incorporates policies to guide siting and design of parks, ongoing programs and maintenance, safety and access, sustainability and funding, and other key goals. The Master Plan includes comprehensive implementation strategies to achieve these policy goals.
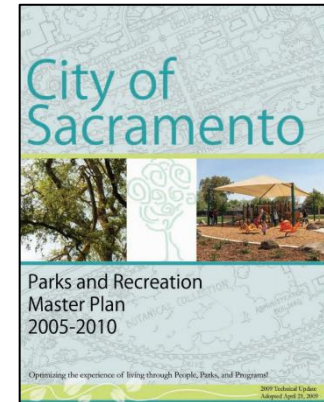
PARK ACCESS POLICY GOALS

Comprehensive goals that address the multi-disciplinary nature of parks policy is critical for creating effective park access and ultimately improving health outcomes in communities. Park access is more than proximity to a park – land use, street design, and other components of the built environment play a role in whether a park is safely and conveniently accessible. From park siting to infrastructure to funding, strong policies create the guiding principles that fuel how a community can look and feel. Effective policy must consider the intended outcomes of implementation and how it will improve access. The following categories outline comprehensive goals to guide meaningful policy recommendations. These goals are based on policy gaps that were identified through a policy scan of existing policies in the Sacramento Region as well as national and statewide policy best practices.

Connectivity

Existing parks should be easily, safely, and comfortably accessible by active travel modes such as walking and biking. This policy goal focuses on prioritizing multimodal connectivity along routes to parks and using data metrics and health equity as a lens for improving physical access.

Land Use and Siting

The development and siting of new parks should be informed through a health equity lens in order to provide access in communities that currently lack parks within a 10-minute walk of neighborhoods. Policies should create opportunities for green space through creative and adaptive uses.

Safety

Safety policies address both traffic safety and personal safety. Traffic safety can be addressed through adopting Vision Zero policies and other safe infrastructure approaches. In addition to traffic safety along routes to parks, it is important to foster personal safety through adopting comprehensive Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies.

Health and Education

Non-infrastructure education and encouragement campaigns are an important component of park access that fosters healthy and active living and promotes park use. Policies should create a more cohesive connection between park programs and active transportation education and encouragement opportunities.

Collaboration

Comprehensive park access relies on cross-sector partnerships in order to achieve policy goals. Policies should encourage and formalize collaboration between stakeholders for infrastructure improvements, programs, and other implementation measures to improve access.

POLICY GOAL: CONNECTIVITY

Pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, especially along routes to existing parks, is critical for encouraging active travel, promoting park use, and improving health outcomes. In particular, communities with poor health outcomes are less likely to own a vehicle, more likely to rely on public transit and active transportation, and more likely to live in a neighborhood with car-oriented development patterns and inadequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Policies that aim to address connectivity along routes to parks should prioritize active transportation infrastructure that creates a safe and comfortable user experience.

EXISTING POLICY LANDSCAPE

Overall, multimodal access to community destinations such as schools, business districts, parks, and other activity centers is listed as a policy goal. Existing policies recognize the importance of safe infrastructure for pedestrian and bicycle travel and identify certain strategies for achieving multimodal connectivity. Beyond safety, comfort and convenience for pedestrians and bicyclists are also identified as policy goals. Promoting street trees and reducing manmade barriers such as indirect street networks and utility poles are among some of the strategies highlighted to address comfort and convenience. Policies also identify the connection between land use patterns and transportation and opportunities for compact development in new communities. These existing policies provide a foundation for safe, accessible, and convenient active transportation infrastructure.

POLICY GAPS

While existing policies prioritize multimodal network connectivity generally, they lack strong policy language around health equity and addressing transportation barriers within disadvantaged communities. Additionally, policies do not have data metrics to drive transportation investments, particularly in areas that are disproportionately impacted by poor park access. While park access is mentioned through some policies, connections to and between parks is not highlighted as strongly as it could be. Effective and equitable connectivity policies must institutionalize data-driven processes in order to improve health equity.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Regional and Local Governments should develop policies that establish baseline data conditions, data metrics, and prioritize data-driven projects to improve equitable access to parks. Health should be incorporated as one of the priority metrics for project identification.

- Regional and Local Governments should assess opportunities for green networks that prioritize connections between parks and creates comfortable, low-stress routes.

- Cities and Counties should adopt policies that prioritize the needs of vulnerable road users on street networks within ½ mile of parks.

- General Plans should include assessment guidelines to coordinate projects to parks and infrastructure within a ½ mile of parks.

- Park Master Plans should identify data-driven opportunities for increasing multi-modal access to parks.

POLICY BEST PRACTICES

The following are examples of types of policies that can be adopted or strengthened from existing policy language in order to improve connectivity to existing parks.

All Ages and Abilities or "8-80" Policy

Parks should be easily accessible for children, families, older adults, and people with disabilities. 8-80 is a concept that if a street is safely navigable for an 8-year-old and an 80-year-old, it will be safely navigable for everyone. Ensuring that routes to parks are designed for people of all ages and abilities is important for equitable park access and providing opportunities for health and play.

Recommendation

Adopt at the City, County, Park District, and School District levels. Could be incorporated into the Circulation Element of General Plans, Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans, or Park Master Plans.

Policy Best Practices

- Creating Parks and Public Spaces for People of All Ages[1]
- Designing for All Ages and Abilities[2]
- Noteworthy Local Policies that Support Safe and Complete Pedestrian and Bicycle Networks[3]
- Advancing Policies to Support Healthy Eating and Active Living[4]

Case Study

The City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin developed a Complete Streets Policy[5] that prioritizes the safety of vulnerable road users and established a goal for users of all ages and abilities to safely, comfortably, and conveniently travel through the street network.

Complete Streets Policy

A complete streets policy formalizes the intent to plan, design, and maintain streets that are safe for users of all ages and abilities. A complete streets policy that prioritizes routes to community destinations (such as parks) can encourage active travel and increase physical activity in communities. A complete streets policy can further address health equity by prioritizing access in communities that are more vulnerable to poor health outcomes.

Recommendation

Adopt at the City and County level. Could be incorporated into the Circulation Element of the General Plan or through Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans.

Strengthen from existing policy within the City of Sacramento General Plan: "The City shall strive to remove and minimize the effect of natural and manmade barriers to accessibility between and within existing neighborhoods corridors, and centers." (Land Use Policy 2.5.2)

Policy Best Practices

- Complete Streets Policy Development[6]
- California Complete Streets Policies[7]
- Complete Parks Playbook[8]
- Advancing Policies to Support Healthy Eating and Active Living[4]

Case Study

The City of Cleveland Heights, Ohio developed a Complete Streets Policy[5] that emphasizes equity, safety for vulnerable road users at all stages of a project (including construction), and clear timeframes for policy implementation. As a result of strong policy language, City staff have the resources and capacity to deliver people-focused projects.

CONNECTIVITY

Data Collection and Evaluation Policy

Data collection and evaluation is critical for identifying and prioritizing routes for improvement. A data and evaluation policy should include indicators that are guided by clear goals for park access and public health. Indicators may include an inventory of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, traffic injury data, public health data, socioeconomic characteristics, and data gathered through community engagement.

Recommendation

Adopt at regional and local levels. Could be incorporated into General Plans or through Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans.

Policy Best Practices

- Planning for Equity Policy Guide[9]
- Safe Routes to Parks Action Framework[10]
- American Planning Association Safe Routes to Parks Factsheet[11]

Case Study

The Parks Department of Miami-Dade County, Florida analyzed cardiovascular disease rates and pedestrian and bicycle crash injury data to target infrastructure investments within ½ mile of parks.[11] This framework allowed the County to prioritize infrastructure projects based on health and safety goals.

Greenways Policy

A greenways policy focuses on designing street connections that promote active travel through safe active transportation infrastructure. Green streets also create opportunities for urban greenery along corridors, which enhances comfort for people using active travel modes and provides a host of other environmental and health benefits.

Recommendation

Adopt at regional and local levels. Could be incorporated through Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans or through a park network planning process.

Policy Best Practices

- Complete Streets Coalition: Green Streets[12]
- EPA: Learn About Green Streets[13]

Case Study

The San Francisco Planning Department developed a Green Connections Network and design toolkit[14] that prioritizes connections to parks and other community destinations and provides strategies for urban greening and active transportation infrastructure.

CONNECTIVITY

Healthy Design Policy

Health should be incorporated into park and streetscape design policies and guidelines. A strong healthy design policy should not only identify the importance of parks for health, but outline specific strategies for implementing active design. Such strategies may include land use considerations, orientation of nearby housing, and location of park entrances.

Recommendation

Adopt at the City, County, and Park District levels. Could be incorporated into Park Master Plans or Park Siting and Design Guidelines.

Strengthen existing policy from the City of Sacramento Parks Master Plan: "Recognize that the creation and/or enhancement of parks and open space are a vital component in the effort to combat and reduce obesity, in the health of children and adults alike." (Community and Community Services 13.24)

Policy Best Practices

- Parks, Trails, and Health Workbook[15]
- How to Create and Implement Healthy General Plans[16]
- Advancing Policies to Support Healthy Eating and Active Living[4]

Case Study

Los Angeles County adopted a Healthy Design Ordinance[17] with the goal of improving public health through the built environment. The ordinance addresses physical access to parks through pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure strategies and highlights the importance of the built environment in encouraging active travel and improving access to healthy destinations.

Tree Canopy Policy

A tree canopy policy formalizes and prioritizes tree canopy within parks and along routes to parks. Tree canopy along streets can provide green connections to community destinations for health, comfort, and mental wellbeing.

Recommendation

Adopt at the City and County levels. Could be incorporated through the Public Facilities Element of the General Plan or through an Urban Forestry Master Plan.

Strengthen existing policy from the City of Sacramento General Plan:
- "The City shall ensure that all new roadway projects and major reconstruction projects provide for the development of an adequate street tree canopy." (Mobility Policy 4.2.3)
- "The City shall pursue opportunities to enhance the urban forest in existing suburban neighborhoods by undertaking neighborhood street tree planting programs that introduce more trees into the public right-of-way, rather than depending on trees in private yards." (Land Use Policy 4.2.2)

Policy Best Practices

- Health in All Policies Task Force[18]
- Urban Forestry Toolkit[19]

Case Study

Santa Monica's Urban Forest Master Plan[20] outlines a vision, goals, and strategies for improving and enhancing the urban forest. The Master Plan includes an analysis of tree canopy coverage and gaps in the tree canopy network, and emphasizes the importance of planting the right trees in the right places.

POLICY GOAL: LAND USE AND SITING

Siting and development of new parks is a key component of park access, particularly in communities where parks are not currently located nearby. Policies to improve park access through the creation of new parks should commit to data-driven processes and allow for flexible and adaptive land uses in order to improve health equity.

EXISTING POLICY LANDSCAPE

Existing policies regarding park siting and development have a strong emphasis on co-locating parks near schools, community centers, and residential land uses. Policies that address land acquisition focus on developing parks in existing neighborhoods, with a focus on under-served neighborhoods. Additionally, an assessment of multimodal transportation networks is identified as a factor in siting new parks in order to promote walking, biking, and transit.

POLICY GAPS

While existing policies recognize the importance of providing parks in communities, further actionable guidance is needed in order to guide equitable park development. Park siting and development policies should include a strong equity component to ensure that parks and green space is provided in neighborhoods with poor health outcomes and lack of accessible parks. Policies that allow for innovative use of land, such as joint use policies with schools, urban greenways, parklets, open streets, and other shared or adaptive uses can help address park gaps in communities.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- <u>Cities and Counties should</u> adopt policies that allow for flexible use of land in order to provide opportunities for play and urban greening, even in densely populated urban spaces.

- <u>Cities, Counties, and Park Districts should</u> establish baseline data conditions, data metrics, and prioritize data-driven projects to improve equitable siting and development of new parks. Health should be incorporated as one of the priority metrics for project identification.

- <u>Park Districts should</u> identify opportunities for joint-use agreements with schools, community centers, and other public or private facilities.

- <u>General Plans should contain</u> statements and policies that prioritize equity in park access and projects around parks.

POLICY BEST PRACTICES

The following are examples of types of policies that can be adopted or strengthened from existing policy language in order to improve park access through siting and development of new parks.

Adaptive Space Policy

An adaptive space policy creates additional opportunities for green space, particularly in communities that do not have much land available for park development. Examples include a parklet, pocket park, green alley, open streets, or play streets policy.

Recommendation

Adopt at the City and County levels. Could be incorporated into the General Plan or Park Master Plans.

Strengthen from existing policy within the Sacramento County General Plan: "Consistent with its infill development standards and mixed use Commercial Corridor plans, the County in consultation with the local recreation and park districts shall encourage new infill and Corridor development projects to provide small plazas, pocket parks, civic spaces, and other gathering places that are available to the public to help encourage pedestrian activity, meet recreational needs and service standards consistent with Smart Growth principles." (Public Facilities - 124)

Policy Best Practices

- Complete Parks Playbook[8]
- Creating Parks and Public Spaces for People of All Ages[1]

Case Study

The Avalon Green Alley Network Demonstration Project[21] focused on transforming alleys into neighborhood green spaces in low-income areas with high rates of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. The project implemented a Green Alley Framework that focused on environmental, economic, and social priorities.

Equitable Park Access Policy

An equitable park access policy should aim to prioritize park projects in communities based on socioeconomic factors (such as income), health outcomes, and lack of current park space.

Recommendation

Adopt at the City, County, and Park District levels. Could be incorporated into General Plans or Park Master Plans.

Strengthen from existing policy within the City of Sacramento General Plan: "The City shall strive to equitably distribute public facilities, improvements, and services throughout the city, with priority given to remedying existing deficiencies in blighted or underserved neighborhoods." (Land use Policy 2.8.2)

Strengthen from existing policy within the City of Sacramento Parks Master Plan: "Locate parks equitably to all parts of the City in accordance with the Service Level Goals." (Siting 12.27)

Policy Best Practices

- Safe Routes to Parks Action Framework[10]
- Safety, Growth, and Equity: Parks and Open Space[22]
- Advancing Policies to Support Healthy Eating and Active Living[4]
- Planning for Equity Policy Guide[9]

Case Study

The Los Angeles Countywide Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment[23] identified several health and socioeconomic indicators for communities throughout the county, which were then measured against a set of park access metrics to identify areas with high park need. This approach helped incorporate a health equity lens throughout the process.

Shared or Joint Use Policy

A shared or joint use policy allows public use of open space facilities based on mutually agreed-upon conditions. Shared or joint use policies could be put in place with schools or religious institutions as a way to provide access to green space in communities that do not have easily accessible parks.

Recommendation

Adopt at the City, County, Park District, and School District levels. Could be incorporated into Park Master Plans or Specific Plans.

Policy Best Practices

- Model Joint Use Agreement Resources[24]
- Shared Use Playbook[25]
- Advancing Policies to Support Healthy Eating and Active Living[4]

Case Study

Seattle Parks and Recreation worked with Seattle School District No.1[26] to develop a Joint Use Agreement with the goal of fostering community learning and health.

POLICY GOAL: SAFETY

A crucial aspect of creating access to parks is addressing personal and traffic safety on routes to parks and while at the park site. Real and perceived safety concerns can affect the decision to walk, bike or take transit to a park. Beyond personal safety, inadequate infrastructure deters active travel by creating a dangerous and unpleasant environment. Improving personal and traffic safety at and around parks can increase physical activity and park use, thereby improving community health.

EXISTING POLICY LANDSCAPE

Traffic safety is prioritized through policies such as Vision Zero and through Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans, which aim to address pedestrian and bicycle collisions by identifying opportunities for infrastructure improvements. Additionally, the City and County address bicycle safety through education by encouraging safe behaviors. In terms of personal safety, some mention is made of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) strategies, such as well-lit routes, maintenance and clean-up of graffiti, and creating natural surveillance of streets and parks.

POLICY GAPS

Policies prioritize traffic safety generally, but lack prioritization on infrastructure within a ½ mile of parks. In addition, there is a strong focus on streetscape infrastructure and built environment improvements, but lack of policies addressing personal safety to and at park sites. By prioritizing personal safety and CPTED strategies, local jurisdictions can create communities where individuals feel safe and empowered to spend time outside which increases physical health as well as increasing the use of the community public spaces.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- <u>Cities and Counties should</u> develop a framework for community-based safety initiatives in order to reduce over-policing and uplift community pride and ownership.

- <u>Cities and Counties should</u> adopt Vision Zero policies that are informed by and implement a data-driven approach to street safety. Vision Zero policies should focus on infrastructure improvements, as well as opportunities for education and encouragement campaigns. Enforcement strategies should consider ways to avoid over-policing and racial bias.

- <u>Cities, Counties, and Park Districts should</u> adopt comprehensive CPTED policies that require a CPTED review of new park site plans and updates to existing parks. These policies should also incorporate maintenance, lighting, and park activations strategies to implement along key routes to parks and at park sites.

- <u>Park Districts should</u> identify and implement programs to activate parks and encourage ownership from the surrounding neighborhood, which not only encourages park use but in turn creates a safer environment around the park.

- <u>Park Master Plans and Specific Plans</u> should include design guidelines for park lighting, landscaping, and amenity placement and orientation based on CPTED principles. Park plans should include a maintenance strategy.

POLICY BEST PRACTICES

The following are examples of types of policies that can be adopted or strengthened from existing policy language in order to improve safety at parks and along routes to parks.

Community-Based Safety Policy

Developing a framework for community-led safety initiatives is an important component for equitable park access by reducing over-policing and increasing positive activity at and around park sites. A community-based safety policy may include strategies such as adopt-a-park maintenance groups, community park or neighborhood watch, and walking groups to activate park spaces and routes to parks.

Additionally, to reduce over-policing and negative interactions between law enforcement and community members, a law enforcement partnership policy should aim to create meaningful and positive community-police and youth-police relationships. Policies and programs should build trust in a way that improves overall community safety.

Recommendation
Adopt at the City, County, and Park District levels. Could be incorporated into Park Master Plans.

Policy Best Practices
- Community Safety: A Building Block for Healthy Communities[27]
- Engaging Communities as Partners: Strategies for Problem Solving[28]
- Advancing Policies to Support Healthy Eating and Active Living[4]

Case Study
In Los Angeles, the Urban Peace Institute's Community Safety Partnership program[29] has helped to build trust between residents and law enforcement. The program build capacity for law enforcement officers and residents to develop and implement programs, address quality of life, and access resources such as employment training, medical programs, and counseling.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Policy

CPTED policies aim to reduce opportunities for crime through design strategies and programmatic approaches rather than through enforcement. A comprehensive CPTED policy should address siting and design of new parks, allocation of resources to retrofit existing parks, ongoing maintenance, and programming.

Recommendation
Adopt at the City, County, and Park District levels. Could be incorporated into General Plans or Park Master Plans.

Strengthen existing policy in the City of Sacramento Parks Master Plan: "Design and develop safe, sustainable, and useable parks and facilities in accordance with the City Park and Recreation Facility Design and Development Standards, Crime Prevention through Environmental Design Standards (CPTED), emerging recreation activities (trends), and in accordance with an identified purpose." (Design 12.29)

Policy Best Practices
- Health in All Policies: CPTED[30]
- Putting the "Safe" in Safe Routes to Parks[31]

Case Study
The City of Portland, Oregon has a comprehensive CPTED policy[32] that prioritizes and names funding for each kind of development and the associated CPTED principles that will be enacted. This policy should include all the main principles of CPTED, including natural surveillance, natural access control, territorial reinforcement and maintenance.

Park Activation Policy

Park activation and programming can help improve safety by bringing more activity and "eyes on the park". Policies that focus on programs should highlight the importance of park activation for safety and identify context-sensitive programs to encourage park use.

Recommendation

Adopt at the City, County, and Park District levels. Could be incorporated into Park Master Plans.

Policy Best Practices

- Complete Parks Playbook[8]
- Creating Safe Park Environments to Enhance Community Wellness[33]

Case Study

Los Angeles County established a Parks After Dark Program[34] with key community partners to keep parks open later as an effort to reduce crime and help connect youth to their parks and other community resources.

Park Maintenance Policy

Maintenance is a critical component of CPTED, as trash, graffiti, and poorly maintained equipment and facilities can create a sense of lack of personal safety and further contribute to unintended uses. Prioritizing maintenance through policy should be a key strategy to address safety concerns.

Recommendation

Adopt at the City, County, and Park District levels. Could be incorporated into Park Master Plans.

Policy Best Practices

- Health in All Policies: CPTED[30]
- Best Management Practices[35]

Case Study

The Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation in Youngstown, Ohio[36] worked with the community to replace old tennis courts in Homestead Park with green space. The old tennis courts had fallen into disrepair and were attracting negative activities to the park, such as drinking, drug abuse, and shootings. By renovating the park with aesthetic fencing and green space, community members felt safer using the park and turned the park into a community amenity.

SAFETY

Pedestrian-Scale Lighting Policy

Lighting is a critical component of the built environment that helps reduce fear of and opportunity for crime. Lighting along routes to parks and at park sites should aim to illuminate human activity. This can be accomplished through policies and design standards that prioritize pedestrian-scale lighting and provide context-sensitive specifications for lighting types that reduce glare and maximize visibility.

Recommendation

Adopt at the City, County, and Park District level. Could be incorporated into the Circulation Element of General Plans, Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans, Park Master Plans, or street and park design guidelines.

Policy Best Practices

- CPTED and Lighting: Reducing Crime, Improving Security[37]
- Move This Way: Making Neighborhoods More Walkable and Bikeable[38]

Case Study

Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee[38] developed lighting standards that prioritize pedestrian-scale lighting and fixtures that reduce glare and light impacts to neighboring properties.

Vision Zero Policy

Vision Zero is a comprehensive approach with the goal of eliminating all traffic fatalities and serious injuries and improving safe mobility. Vision Zero policies should be data-driven, prioritize equity for vulnerable road users and disproportionate traffic death impacts on certain populations, and commit to an accountable timeline and context-sensitive strategies.

Recommendation

Adopt at the County level. Could be developed as a Vision Zero Action Plan or incorporated through the Circulation Element of General Plans or through Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans.

Policy Best Practices

- Vision Zero Network[39]

Case Study

Portland's Vision Zero Action Plan[40] was developed based on data highlighting high crash corridors and intersections throughout the city. The Action Plan focuses on vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, bicyclists, people of color, youth, the elderly, people with disabilities, and households with limited vehicle access. The Action Plan prioritizes infrastructure gaps and outlines additional educational strategies to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries. The City released a two-year update in 2019 to evaluate implementation efforts to-date and develop updated strategies as needed.

POLICY GOAL: HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Creating physical access to parks is most effective when paired with policies that address non-infrastructure components such as programming, education campaigns, and activation of public spaces. These strategies, combined with streetscape and infrastructure improvements, help form a comprehensive approach that encourages and fosters a culture of health and active travel.

EXISTING POLICY LANDSCAPE

Existing policies focus on promoting pedestrian and bicycle education, including safe walking and biking behaviors as well as the health and environmental benefits of active transportation. Policies encourage development of programs that are culturally relevant to community members and promote health, personal enrichment, and positive relationships. In addition to active transportation education, park districts highlight nutrition and wellness as a programmatic goal.

POLICY GAPS

Health and education policies tend to be more generally focused on walking and biking generally, with no direct connection about walking and biking as a safe and health way to travel to parks. Similarly, park programs often do not incorporate pedestrian and bicycle education despite the natural opportunity. Parks should be more strongly linked to health and education programs. Additionally, health should be a more substantive element to infrastructure policy due to the connection between health and the built environment.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- <u>Cities, Counties, and Park Districts should</u> educate the community and stakeholders about the benefits of walking and biking and use parks as a central focal point in this education.

- <u>Park Master Plans should contain</u> education program policy that allows for yearly revision to make sure all programmatic elements of the parks are still effective for the communities.

- <u>Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans should</u> prioritize parks as a destination for pedestrian and bicycle improvements and a center point for stakeholder and pedestrian and cyclist education.

POLICY BEST PRACTICES

The following are examples of types of policies that can be adopted or strengthened from existing policy language in order to foster a culture of healthy living and improve health outcomes.

Active Transportation Programming Policy

Parks provide an opportunity to educate users and stakeholders about the importance of active travel to community destinations for health. Policies should aim to include active transportation programs that encourage walking and biking to parks.

Recommendation

Adopt at the Regional, City, and County levels. Could be incorporated into Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans or Parks Master Plans.

Strengthen existing policy language to explicitly link park programming to active transportation education and encouragement programs.

Policy Best Practices

- Safe Routes to School Meets Safe Routes to Parks[41]

Case Study

The Walk With a Doc[42] program is an example of a program that encourages active travel and educates residents about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

Healthy Food and Nutrition Policy

General health and wellness should be incorporated as a policy goal for park districts. Park policies should consider opportunities to embed healthy food access into site design and programming. Examples of strategies include farmers markets, community gardens, and healthy vending partnerships.

Recommendation

Adopt at the City, County, and Park District levels. Could be incorporated into Parks Master Plans.

Strengthen existing policy from the City of Sacramento Parks Master Plan:
- "Continue to emphasize the value of community gardens in providing recreation, community building, productive landscape, sustainability, and educational opportunities." (Community Engagement and Outreach 1.9)
- "Educate the public about how they may achieve health and wellness and provide or collaborate with multidisciplinary health partners in developing facilities and programs that support improved physical activity, health, and well-being." (Recreation and Community Services 13.14)

Policy Best Practices

- Healthy Out-of-School Time Wellness Policy Guide[43]
- Healthy Eating Physical Activity Standards[44]

Case Study

The Chicago Parks District has a comprehensive health and wellness policy[45] for all park users that includes nutrition guidelines, health education and healthy vending partnerships.

POLICY GOAL: COLLABORATION

Creating avenues for collaboration between agencies and across sectors is critical for ensuring comprehensive access to parks and achieving desired health outcomes in communities. Different organizations provide valuable technical expertise, programs, and services that can be more effective when leveraged together. Collaboration should be formalized through policy in order to build and sustain relationships and improve overall park access.

EXISTING POLICY LANDSCAPE

Collaborative park access policies currently focus on infrastructure, programs, education, and safety. Many policies across jurisdictions support co-location strategies as a way to partner with businesses and agencies to improve access to parks, such as co-locating schools, libraries, and other community facilities near park sites.

POLICY GAPS

Existing collaborative policies highlight the importance of collaboration, but do not identify specific partners or formalize partnerships, particularly in regards to park access. Additionally, policies that address connectivity and infrastructure do not include a collaboration component that recognizes the need for agency collaboration during implementation. Policy best practices to create sustained access to parks include innovative collaborative funding opportunities, integrating community members into park planning processes, and formalizing the role of cross-sector and interagency partnerships. Policies that create avenues for community members, businesses, and agency partners to collaborate on various infrastructure and non-infrastructure aspects are most effective for achieving comprehensive access goals.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- <u>Cities, Counties, and Park Districts should</u> create evaluation standards for private and public partners to maintain a healthy and beneficial collaborative relationship that actively benefits the park and surrounding community.

- <u>Cities, Counties, and Park Districts should</u> formalize community engagement as an ongoing process and a valuable collaborative opportunity to inform park access projects.

- <u>Park Master Plans should contain</u> policies that formalize agreements between private and public partners for funding, project implementation, or program delivery.

- <u>Park Specific Plans should contain</u> programs and policies that are informed by needs of the community and resources for community members to take ownership of certain programs or key implementation aspects.

POLICY BEST PRACTICES

The following are examples of types of policies that can be adopted or strengthened from existing policy language in order to facilitate greater collaboration between agencies and other park stakeholders.

Community Partnership Policy

Formalizing the role of community members and neighborhood organizations as partners in park planning, design, and implementation is critical for equitable park access processes. Community partnership policies should focus on the value of the community engagement process and identify avenues to sustain ongoing relationships between agencies and communities.

Recommendation

Adopt at the City, County, and Park District levels. Could be incorporated into Park Master Plans or Specific Area Plans.

Policy Best Practices

- Complete Parks Playbook[8]
- Safe Routes to Parks Action Framework[10]
- Equity in Safe Routes to Parks[46]

Case Study

The Environmental Health Coalition works to empower community members in National City by providing a Community Leadership Training Program.[47] Residents who participate in the program have taken the lead on park assessments in coordination with city planners in order to co-develop plans that reflect community needs and priorities.

Cross-Sector Health Partnership Policy

Formalizing partnerships between health, transportation, and other key local agency departments, as well as between other public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders, is critical for carrying forward and sustaining effective park access projects and programs.

Recommendation

Adopt at the City, County, and Park District levels. Could be incorporated into General Plans, Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans, or Park Master Plans.

Policy Best Practices

- American Planning Association Safe Routes to Parks Factsheet[11]
- Plan4Health[48]

Case Study

A cross-sector partnership between the San Francisco Department of Public Health, the Trust for Public Land, and the RAND Corporation has led to significant infrastructure investment around parks in under-served areas of the city.[11] By leveraging each organization's expertise, the partnership was able to meet the needs of the community and has resulted in improved safety and increased park use.

COLLABORATION

Partnership Management and Evaluation Policy

A partnership management and evaluation policy aims to create formal avenues to form partnerships and identifies criteria to maintain and evaluate them. Formalizing partnerships can help align goals across organizations and sustain efforts for improving park access. Agreements may include shared-use, joint financing agreements, integration of community planning efforts, etc.

Recommendation

Adopt at the City, County, and Park District levels. Could be incorporated into General Plans, Park Master Plans, or Specific Area Plans.

Policy Best Practices

- Safe Routes to Parks Action Framework[10]

Case Study

The Consumnes CSD Parks and Recreation Master Plan[49] includes policy language to evaluate existing partnerships and identify partnership opportunities. The Mission-Based Decision Making Tool provides criteria and a scorecard to verify to what extent new or existing partnerships and programs are in line with the Department mission, vision and goals.

COLLABORATION

CONCLUSION

A strong policy foundation focusing on the five policy goals outlined above has potential to improve health outcomes through a comprehensive approach to park access that expands beyond the traditional approach of park proximity. This report highlighted general policy opportunities based on a literature review of policies at SACOG, Sacramento County, and the City of Sacramento, however, policies can be broadly applied across jurisdictions throughout the County that are interested in improving park access. Below are more specific opportunity areas for park access policies at the City and County:

CITY OF SACRAMENTO

Connectivity: City policies identify a need to remove and minimize the effect of natural and manmade barriers within neighborhoods and outline strategies to support pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to community destinations. However, a stronger connection to parks and the benefits for health could be made throughout the General Plan and Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans. Additionally, policies lack an equity component to guide active transportation infrastructure investment in communities that are vulnerable to poor health outcomes. Stronger connectivity policies at the City should focus on complete streets, all ages and abilities, and establishing data-driven metrics to guide equitable active transportation infrastructure investments.

Land Use and Siting: City policies link neighborhood development to parks and identify health-supportive development strategies such as co-locating parks with other community destinations and orienting residential housing towards parks. Policies prioritize equitably distributing public facilities and improvements throughout the City, but do not include further metrics for defining "blight" and "underserved" or actions to advance these goals. Stronger land use and siting policies at the City should focus on metrics for assessing the need for and location of new parks, engaging community members in the planning and development of new parks, and updating zoning ordinances to allow for flexible and adaptive use of land for green space within established communities.

Safety: City policies include a Vision Zero Action Plan to address traffic safety, as well as community stewardship, CPTED design, and maintenance of park sites to improve personal safety. CPTED policies are included in the Parks Master Plan specifically for park design, however are lacking from the General Plan and Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan. Stronger safety policies at the City should focus on incorporating CPTED into zoning ordinances and throughout other planning documents.

Health and Education: City policies highlight education and encouragement programs as strategies to promote active travel and safe walking and biking skills. However, there is a lack of connection between active transportation education and encouragement programs and park programming. Stronger health and education policies at the City should focus on park programming that encourages active transportation as well as healthy nutrition programs at parks for overall health and wellness education.

Collaboration: City policies focus on forming and maintaining partnerships with agencies across jurisdictional boundaries, understanding that parks in other jurisdictions provide benefits to City residents living nearby. However, a community engagement component is lacking. Stronger collaboration policies at the City should include meaningful community engagement as a priority for park access and aim to develop avenues for ongoing partnership with communities.

SACRAMENTO COUNTY

Connectivity: County policies identify parks as important community destinations that should be aligned with pedestrian and bicycle networks, but an equity component is lacking. Stronger connectivity policies at the County should focus on complete streets, all ages and abilities, and a framework for addressing infrastructure inequities in communities in order to create safe and comfortable routes to parks.

Land Use and Siting: County policies include joint-use opportunities with schools, churches, and other community centers as a strategy to improve access to parks. The County also encourages new infill development to provide public gathering space such as pocket parks and plazas. However, park siting is not guided by a health or equity analysis. Stronger land use and siting policies at the County should focus on metrics for assessing the need for and location of new parks, engaging community members in the planning and development of new parks, and updating zoning ordinances to allow for flexible and adaptive use of land for green space within established communities.

Safety: County policies focus on traffic calming and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to improve traffic safety, but do not include data-driven policies such as Vision Zero or personal safety policies such as CPTED. Stronger safety policies at the County should commit to Vision Zero and incorporate CPTED into zoning ordinances and park planning policies.

Health and Education: County policies highlight education and encouragement programs as strategies to promote active travel and safe walking and biking skills. However, there is a lack of connection between active transportation education and encouragement programs and park programming. Stronger health and education policies at the County should focus on park programming that encourages active transportation as well as healthy nutrition programs at parks for overall health and wellness education.

Collaboration: County policies identify collaborative opportunities between the County and local park districts, school districts, and Sacramento Regional Transit in order to improve active transportation networks and park access. Policy direction for coordinating across jurisdictions, such as with the City of Sacramento, as well as policies supporting meaningful community engagement around park access are lacking. Stronger collaboration policies at the County should focus on strengthening cross-jurisdictional partnerships for transportation infrastructure and park access projects.

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