

Policies that Support Parks and Open Public Spaces: Global Examples



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Introduction

Open public spaces, such as parks, public squares, and beaches, play a vital role in everyday urban life by providing places for recreation, social interaction, and access to green space. Parks, in particular, offer opportunities for a wide range of physical activities, including sports and informal play. Access to high-quality parks is therefore an important contributor to overall well-being. For the purposes of this paper, the term parks is used to refer broadly to all open public spaces.

A growing body of research demonstrates that access to parks and green spaces provides significant physical and mental health benefits.¹ Studies show that exposure to such environments is associated with increased longevity and lower rates of obesity.² Green spaces can also improve urban air quality, helping to reduce exposure to pollution. Through these pathways, access to parks can contribute to lower rates of non-communicable diseases linked to both air pollution and physical inactivity.³ For example, a review drawing largely on studies from the Global North found that greater exposure to urban green space was associated with lower heart rates, as well as improvements in attention, mood, and levels of physical activity.⁴

Open public spaces also play important social, cultural, and economic roles. They serve as places of cultural exchange and discovery, allowing residents and visitors to experience local culture and traditions while contributing to tourism in surrounding areas.⁵ Evidence also suggests that well-maintained parks and public spaces can increase the value of nearby properties.⁶ At the same time, these spaces create economic opportunities for vulnerable populations. Individuals with limited access to formal employment often rely on public spaces to sell food, clothing, and other goods. Without access to these spaces, many people would have few viable opportunities to generate income.⁷

Open public spaces can also strengthen social cohesion within communities. They create opportunities for people from different cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic groups to interact and share common spaces, which can foster a greater sense of connection among community members. By encouraging interaction across diverse populations, these spaces can also help support cultural exchange and diversity.^{8,9}

Additionally, open public spaces provide important environmental benefits. The increase in hard surfaces and the loss of green areas in cities contribute to higher urban temperatures compared with surrounding rural areas. Parks that include trees and vegetation help mitigate this effect by cooling the air, providing shade, and absorbing air pollutants.¹⁰ These benefits are particularly important in cities with hot climates, where cooler outdoor environments can reduce the demand for air conditioning and contribute to improved air quality. Parks also help improve water quality and can reduce flooding by allowing rainwater to infiltrate the ground rather than run off hard surfaces.^{11,12}

Finally, open public spaces are a vital resource during public health emergencies and natural disasters. They can serve as safe gathering points and locations for distributing emergency services and essential utilities such as first aid, fresh water, electricity, and communication.¹³ During pandemics, public spaces also provide opportunities for people to maintain their physical and mental well-being while reducing the risk of pathogen transmission compared with indoor settings. Access to open public spaces was shown to significantly support people's health and well-being during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁴

Despite their many benefits, parks are often neglected in urban planning and development. In many cities, parks are not adequately included in planning frameworks, resulting in an insufficient supply of accessible public spaces.¹⁵ Parks also frequently face encroachment, which is the deliberate or accidental intrusion of other activities or developments onto park land. This can include dumping garbage or construction materials in these areas. Encroachment reduces the social, physical, and economic value of parks by making them less attractive and less usable, which discourages people from visiting.

Policies that recognize and protect parks can help prevent encroachment and ensure that these spaces are incorporated into development plans. Strengthening such protections can improve the quality of parks and enhance the well-being of the communities that use them. Given the important role that parks play in supporting health, quality of life, local economies, and environmental sustainability, it is essential to develop policies that preserve, protect, and enhance these community assets.

DID YOU KNOW?

In a well planned and properly functioning city, 45-50% of the city's area should be public spaces, with 30-35% being streets and 15-20% being other public spaces such as parks, playgrounds, plazas and beaches.¹⁶

However, many urban governments face challenges in planning, prioritizing, and allocating resources for public space because of the absence of clear and comprehensive public space policies. Establishing stronger policy frameworks for open public spaces can raise their profile in urban governance and support more effective planning and investment, ultimately leading to better outcomes for cities and their residents.¹⁷

DID YOU KNOW?

UN-Habitat's Global Public Space Programme has contributed to the development of over 150 safe and accessible public spaces in over 100 cities since 2012. In 2021, UN-Habitat upgraded 40 public spaces, engaged over 22,400 people, and provided accessible, safe and inclusive public spaces for over 395,000 people. Additionally, over 2,800 people received training in public space assessment, design, and project implementation.¹⁸

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to identify examples from around the world of open public space policies that support the successful development and maintenance of parks. While the paper discusses different types of open public spaces, its primary focus is on local parks. It also outlines the roles of both city and national governments and how each can develop policies to plan, build, and maintain local parks.

Although regional or state governments are not the focus of this document, they are also important actors in park development and often work collaboratively with city and national governments. In many cases, regional or state governments may adopt policies similar to those discussed here, though national-level policies may sometimes be more relevant to their jurisdiction.

The policies presented in this paper illustrate approaches that have supported effective park development in different contexts and have helped communities and governments create successful parks and open public spaces. These examples are intended to serve as guidance for governments seeking to strengthen their policy frameworks and improve the development and long-term management of parks.

National Policies

Although the development and maintenance of parks typically fall under the responsibility of local governments, national governments can play an important supporting role in the park development process. National governments can provide city governments and communities with the resources, guidance, and policy tools needed to improve public spaces. They can also offer oversight and establish national policies that apply across regions and cities. The importance of public and green spaces has also been recognized globally, including through United Nations Sustainable Development Target 11.7, which highlights the need to ensure access to safe, inclusive, and accessible green and public spaces for all:

Target 11.7: By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

As a result of target #11.7, public spaces are now a priority for national governments.

A key policy framework that national governments can use to support parks is a National Urban Policy (NUP). National Urban Policies provide an overall vision to guide the growth and management of cities and are designed to respond to current urban trends and the needs of urban populations. NUPs are typically developed through consultation across multiple levels of government and sectors and, where possible, with residents to ensure that urban policies are comprehensive and responsive to local realities.

NUPs may take different forms. In some countries, they are established through a single law, executive order, or other formal enactment by a national legislature, ministry, or head of state. In others, they emerge more informally through a series of coordinated actions or plans that together form a coherent urban policy framework. Regardless of their form, the key feature of a National Urban Policy is that it establishes a shared vision across levels of government.¹⁹ For countries that adopt them, NUPs often serve as the foundation for the development of city-level urban policies.²⁰

Through NUPs, national governments can support city governments in developing parks, which are an important component of urban development. The policies discussed in this section focus on national-level measures that can strengthen and guide city governments in planning, building, and maintaining parks. This section covers the following types of policies:

- **Location policies**, which address the allocation of unused space and connectivity between parks and surrounding areas;
- **Design policies**, which consider inclusive design, including the needs of marginalized populations and opportunities for public participation;
- **Management policies**, which focus on supportive governance structures and safety considerations;
- **Funding policies**, which explore financing mechanisms such as special accounts, grants, and partnerships.

Ideally, national-level policy on open public space provides clear direction to local governments by establishing minimum standards and policy expectations that cities should meet when developing and maintaining parks. Countries that have NUPs working towards effective public space strategies improve the socio-economic status of their citizens. Countries such as Colombia, Guatemala, Malaysia, and Indonesia have explicit statements about open public spaces in their NUPs. Additionally, UN-Habitat is supporting over 50 countries towards including strategies around public spaces in their NUPs, including Cameroon, Cuba, Liberia, Afghanistan, Egypt, Zambia, Angola, and Argentina, among others.²¹

KEY TOOLS

- **Public Spaces: A Key Tool to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals** is a resource that can help governments understand how a focus on public spaces can help achieve many SDGs including health, gender equality, decent work, and climate action.
- **National Urban Policy: Framework for a Rapid Diagnostic** is a resource developed by UN-Habitat to assist governments in developing NUPs. It includes information on the rationale for conducting a rapid diagnostic, the overall contents of the framework itself, and recommendations for action, strategies, and a road map.
- The United Nations has developed the **New Urban Agenda** that focuses on sustainable development within the urban setting. It highlights the great value of safe, inclusive, accessible, green and quality public spaces, calling on national, regional, and local authorities to ensure urban environments are conducive to a livable city and proper public health.

Location Policies

The location of parks is a crucial element to increase residents' access to parks. Research suggests that park proximity highly influences park use and the decision about whether to visit a park.²² The farther away and less accessible a public space is, the less likely people are to visit it. While city governments will dictate the precise location of parks, national governments can provide general foundational policies with which local governments can adhere.

There are three key areas that a national-level government should consider when developing a location policy for urban open spaces: quantity, distance, and connectivity. In terms of quantity, UN-Habitat concluded that all cities and urban areas should aim to allocate 15-20% of city space as parks.²³ This target provides the foundation for a policy focused on the quantity of parks within urban areas. However, such a target does not guarantee residents will have easy access to parks. Therefore, national governments should also consider specifying a maximum distance that the majority of urban residents will have to walk in order to reach a park. Park proximity to local residents highly influences park use and research suggests that walking distance is typically 400 m to 800 m, which is a five to ten-minute walk.²⁴ One strategy would be for the NUP to set a minimum target for cities to achieve, while encouraging local governments to exceed the target wherever possible. Finally, national governments should consider the connectivity and proximity of parks to one another. Well-connected open spaces support ecological health, reduce biodiversity loss, and strengthen climate resilience. National governments can guide cities in developing integrated park systems that link parks to each other and to surrounding neighbourhoods, improving accessibility, community cohesion, and overall urban livability.

National-level policies and strategies can therefore play an important role in supporting city governments in park development. While cities typically determine specific location policies—such as standards for walking distance to parks—national governments can help guide these decisions by establishing minimum targets and policy direction. Adopting the strategies outlined in this section would help ensure that all residents have access to parks. Issues related to the equitable distribution of parks within cities are discussed further in the 'Local Government Policies' section.

POLICY LANGUAGE TIPS

Example of language that could go into a National Urban Policy:

“Parks

Municipalities will create policies in their land use planning or master plan documents that develop a system of publicly-accessible parkland and open spaces, including in shoreline areas, that:

- Allocates a minimum 20% of urban land to open public spaces;*
- Ensures a minimum of 80% of all urban residents are within an 800 m radius of parks;*
- Prevents biodiversity loss, provides connections between public spaces, and can help with climate adaptation.”*



Hoan Kiem Lake, Hanoi, Vietnam

Design Policies

The design of parks and open spaces is important because design influences the activities that can occur in a park. Design contributes to how fun, safe, and comfortable a park feels for users. National governments can, with the participation of local governments, create policies that outline the minimum design standards expected for public spaces. However, it is important that design policies be flexible enough to allow for local input. Individual parks should reflect the desires of the local community. If national guidelines are too prescriptive, they can prevent innovation and creative collaboration from the community members that a park will serve.

In general, national design policies should include provisions that require local governments to^{24,25,26}:

- Consider the park's natural features and landscape;
- Ensure safety is a consideration in park design and location;
- Adhere to Universal Design Principles;
- Develop a park system that meets the needs of all residents, regardless of gender, age, and income;
- Maintain the natural landscape of the park in order to preserve local identity;
- Encourage active and creative play by users of different ages and physical abilities;
- Design parks to be areas of connectivity, to increase walkability, and to increase physical recreation.

A key priority for national governments should be emphasizing the importance of designing parks to provide access and activities for all citizens, regardless of age, ability, gender, or income, and to provide direction to local governments towards considering the needs of a diverse group of users.

Safe Space Act (Bawal Bastos Law) of 2019 in the Philippines

The Philippines passed into law an Act in 2019 to combat gender-based harassment in public spaces, including parks and streets. More on this policy can be found [here](#).

Another priority for national governments is ensuring that parks contribute meaningfully to environmental goals. In particular, national-level governments have an interest in maintaining biodiversity, supporting climate change adaptation and mitigation, and improving air quality. National governments should consider the ways in which parks can help achieve their broader environmental objectives and align public space policies with existing national strategies in these areas.

In general, national urban policies that address parks should encourage local governments to:²⁷

- Maintain existing indigenous plants and species in park areas;
- Avoid any permanent or negative effects on the ecosystem;
- Prevent the loss or decline of indigenous plants and species;
- Preserve the natural ecosystem and habitats located within a park space; and
- Restore the existing ecosystem if great harm is inflicted onto it by park development.



Informal Settlement, Borisal, Bangladesh

Finally, national governments should encourage local governments to actively involve the public in the design process. Although most public engagement will occur on a local level, national governments can develop policy that:²⁸

- Increases public understanding about the benefits of parks and open public spaces;
- Improves participation among regional and local authorities;
- Promotes involvement from voluntary organizations, private organizations, and the general public; and
- Increases public participation by encouraging local community members to review current policies.

KEY TOOL

A Resource Guide for Planning, Designing and Implementing Green Infrastructure in Parks is a resource developed by the National Recreation and Park association. It outlines strategies for integrating green infrastructure into park planning and management to help professionals design projects that improve stormwater management, environmental sustainability, and community benefits. The full document can be found [here](#).

The EU Green Infrastructure Strategy

The EU Green Infrastructure Strategy's objective is to preserve, restore, and enhance green infrastructure to work towards stopping the loss of biodiversity, and allow ecosystems to benefit the community.²⁹

Taken together, the NUP will have policy language that ensures parks are designed for everyone, ensures environmental features are protected, and involves the community in determining the design and features.

POLICY LANGUAGE TIPS

Example of accessibility and community consultation language that could go into a National Urban Policy:

“Outdoor Play Spaces

Outdoor play spaces, application

The outdoor play spaces to which this section applies consist of an area that includes play equipment, such as swings, or features such as logs, rocks, sand or water, where the equipment or features are designed and placed to provide play opportunities and experiences for children and caregivers.

Outdoor play spaces, consultation requirements

When constructing new or redeveloping existing outdoor play spaces, municipalities and other organizations, shall consult on the needs of children and caregivers with various disabilities and shall do so in the following manner:

- Must consult with the public and persons with disabilities.*
- Must also consult with their municipal accessibility advisory committees, where one has been.*

Outdoor play spaces, accessibility in design

When constructing new or redeveloping existing play spaces that they intend to maintain, municipalities and other organizations shall,

- Incorporate accessibility features, such as sensory and active play components, for children and caregivers with various disabilities into the design of outdoor play spaces; and*
- Ensure that outdoor play spaces have a ground surface that is firm, stable and has impact attenuating properties for injury prevention and sufficient clearance to provide children and caregivers with various disabilities the ability to move through, in and around the outdoor play space.”*

Excerpt from: Province of Ontario’s Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Full Act can be found [here](#).

Management Policies

National governments should develop management policies that provide direction to local governments as part of their NUP. Although the management of parks and public space is the responsibility of city governments and communities, national governments can develop a policy framework that provides direction to local communities regarding minimum expected management standards. In general, the management policies national governments develop for parks and public spaces should discuss:³⁰

- Various safety measures and precautions local governments should take;
- Management procedures city governments and communities can follow;
- Potential implications of poor park maintenance;
- Ways communities, city governments, and the national government can work collaboratively to manage parks and open public spaces; and
- Safe and fair parks use education.

National Urban Policies will outline the elements that local governments must consider when developing their local master plans.

POLICY LANGUAGE TIPS

Example national park management language that could go into a National Urban Policy:

“Municipalities, as part of the official or master plan, shall ensure the plans include the following:

- Procedures for preventative and emergency maintenance of elements in parks including paths and walking trails; sports fields and equipment; playground equipment, surfaces and borders; shelter facilities; toilets; furniture including water taps, benches, and trash bins; and open space grounds.*
- Procedures for maintaining safety equipment such as lighting.*
- Procedures outlining the schedule for trash and litter pick up.*
- Procedures for dealing with temporary disruptions when park elements are not in working order.”*

Excerpt adapted from: [**ICMA Maintenance Standards for Parks and Facilities and Province of Ontario’s Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.**](#)

Funding Policies

National governments can support the development and maintenance of parks by providing financial resources to local governments and community groups. Since national governments typically have access to fiscal tools that are not available at the local level, they are often better positioned to raise and allocate funding. Allocating dedicated funds within national budgets for the development, improvement, and maintenance of parks can help provide local governments with a more reliable source of financing for public spaces.

National governments commonly transfer funds to municipalities so that local governments can develop budgets to build and maintain urban infrastructure and services. Funding for park development can be included within these transfers. In addition to regular fiscal transfers, national governments may also consider additional strategies and funding mechanisms to support park development and maintenance.

Funding for Areas of Special Priority

National governments often identify priority areas where they aim to advance specific policy goals or address pressing challenges. Allocating dedicated funds for particular initiatives can be one way to support park development while advancing these priorities. For example, if a national government prioritizes universal accessibility, gender equality, or climate change adaptation, it can establish targeted funding programs to help local governments implement actions that support these goals within public spaces.

Canada's Enabling Accessibility Fund

In 2019, Canada put into force the [Accessible Canada Act](#) to collectively work towards a barrier-free Canada by 2040. To reach this goal, the government offers a few programs, one of which is the [Enabling Accessibility Fund](#). This fund supports accessibility upgrades in renovated and newly constructed public spaces. Eligible projects can add features such as accessible washrooms, ramps, and hearing induction loops (a device that amplifies sound and transmits to hearing aids), along with other necessary items that create a safe and inclusive environment for people with disabilities.

Special Accounts

Special accounts are dedicated financial accounts established to allocate funding for a specific purpose.³¹ They are often financed through a combination of government funding and contributions from the public and private sectors. Individuals and small businesses may donate to these accounts, and both local governments and community groups can typically access the funds to support improvements to parks and enhance the quality of public spaces.

The Community Programme for Neighbourhood Improvement in Mexico

The **Community Programme for Neighbourhood Improvement (PCMB)** was a community-driven neighbourhood improvement programme that was established in 2007 by the Social Development Secretariat (SDS) of the Federal District government of Mexico City. It used a participatory approach to improving public spaces in informal settlements and low-income neighbourhoods, particularly those with high levels of social conflict, marginalization and/or urban decay. Projects developed through the programme include illumination and paving of streets, provision of recreational, community and sports facilities, rain collection and drainage systems as well as small parks. Funds were distributed directly to the local communities, who are given full responsibility for delivering the projects selected, after training in financial and project management and with the support of the municipality. Over 600 projects were completed by 2012. Between 2007-2018, the program successfully funded 2,127 neighbourhood improvement projects serving over 1.9 million community members in Mexico City.³²

Grants

Grants are another mechanism national governments can use to help develop parks in urban areas.³³ Grants differ from loans in that the recipient does not pay them back. Typically grants are provided to local governments and are often used to rehabilitate particular areas of interest or need within a community. A defined set of criteria is typically used to assess grant applications, and grants are awarded to those that meet the most criteria. National governments should be open and transparent about the granting process, should they decide to use grants to fund parks.

Park Development and Community Revitalization Act in California

In 2008, the California state legislature passed the Park Development and Community Revitalization Act that provides grants for local park development in communities that are underserved (have less than three acres of usable parkland per 1,000 residents) and that have a significant percentage of the population living below the poverty line.³⁴ Currently, the state's 2025-2026 budget has set aside \$188.5 million toward the program to continue to create, expand, and renovate parks across California.³⁵

Bonds and Commercial Finance

Bonds are loans given to governments or organizations that can be issued by national governments or investors.³⁶ Local governments can acquire financial bonds as a way of funding local parks. Local governments can also provide bonds to non-profit or neighbourhood organizations to improve city life. Local community members can vote as to whether or not their city governments can issue bonds to fund parks. Typically, bonds provided to city governments need to be repaid within 30 years. However, policies regarding bonds and commercial finance can vary among national governments.

Trust for Public Land Municipal Bonds

In 2022, the US non-profit organization [Trust for Public Land](#) supported two municipal governments in developing bonds to finance public infrastructure. Voters approved an \$85 million park bond in Salt Lake City, Utah, and a \$15 million bond in Fort Worth, Texas, which passed with 57% voter support. These bonds provide dedicated funding for the development and improvement of parks and other public infrastructure.

Parks and Open Space Bond Levy

[Cromwell Park in Shoreline, Washington](#), is a 9-acre park designed to combine stormwater retention and treatment with recreation. One goal in the original design of the park was to capitalize on the existing wetland and subterranean bog as a way to improve stormwater management in this area of town, rather than adding gray infrastructure. The park was constructed for \$1.65 million with joint funding from the 2006 Parks and Open Space Bond Levy and the Surface Water Utility. The Parks and Open Space Bond Levy is an \$18.5 million bond levy to purchase open space properties, make park improvements and develop trails.

Local Government Policies

Although national governments may establish policies related to parks, the design, construction, and maintenance of open public spaces ultimately occur at the local level. The primary planning instruments available to city governments for park development are land-use planning documents such as Master Plans or Public Spaces Strategies. Cities that actively plan and invest in parks often prepare Master Plans or Strategies to guide local decision-making and investment. A Master Plan or Strategy may be a stand-alone document or form part of a city's broader official or comprehensive plan.

Where a National Urban Policy (NUP) exists, Master Plans and Strategies should align with its policy direction while providing more detailed guidance at the city level. A Master Plan or Strategy typically includes:

- Park typology policies, which define the different types of parks;
- Location policies, which address accessibility and appropriate distances between parks and residents;
- Design policies, which consider amenities and facilities, park layout and aesthetics, and environmental features;
- Management policies, which outline management approaches and maintenance strategies;
- Funding policies, which describe financing strategies and opportunities for volunteer involvement.

Together, these policies provide the key considerations needed to guide the planning, development, and long-term maintenance of parks and open public spaces.

KEY TOOLS

- The [Global Public Spaces Toolkit](#) prepared by UN-Habitat, this is a practical reference for local governments to frame and implement principles, policy recommendations and development initiatives on public space. It demonstrates the value of involving citizens and civil society in securing, developing, and managing public space in the city.
- City-wide [Public Space Assessment Toolkit](#) developed by UN-Habitat guides cities conducting a public space assessment in their area in an effort to support development of public space strategy or policy. This tool allows cities to assess the network, distribution, accessibility, quantity and quality of public spaces.
- The [Health in All Policies Framework](#) developed by the WHO guides policymakers to integrate health considerations into policy. Urban health should be embedded in policy so that it is prioritized by governments in the long term. Given that green and open public space contributes positively to citizen health, it should be a priority for achieving adequate urban health.

Park Typology Policies

Just as there are many types of open public spaces, there are also many types of parks, each serving different needs within a community. Park typology policies, often referred to as Park Classification Systems, define the different types of parks, their typical size, and their intended uses. These policies are important because cities require a range of park types to meet the social, health, economic, and environmental needs of residents.

Park typology policies help ensure that parks serve diverse purposes and remain accessible to the broader public. While each city develops its own classification system—including the names and size ranges assigned to different park types—most systems follow similar principles. As a general guide, park classification systems typically include at least the following types of parks:

Parks that serve the city

City parks are large parks designed to serve the entire city. They are often destination spaces that attract residents from across the city as well as visitors and tourists. While their size can vary, city parks are typically at least 10 hectares and are often significantly larger. City parks usually provide a wide range of amenities that support both passive and active recreation. Passive recreation includes activities such as sitting, reading, or socializing, while active recreation may include walking, cycling, and sports. These parks often contain sports fields and facilities that can host games, tournaments, and city-wide events such as festivals or concerts. They also commonly include walking paths, open green spaces, and playgrounds for children. Since visitors often spend extended periods of time in these parks, basic amenities such as public toilets and drinking water should be available. Given their city-wide function, these parks should also be easily accessible by walking, cycling, and public transit.

Parks that serve one or more communities

Community parks are designed to serve a smaller population within the city than city-wide parks. They typically function as focal points for two or more neighbourhoods and are often located along busier streets to ensure accessibility. Community parks are generally easy for nearby residents to reach by walking, cycling, or public transit and are usually between one and three hectares in size. These parks provide space for both passive and active recreation. Common features include seating areas, walking paths, playgrounds, and sports facilities, allowing residents to gather, exercise, and spend time outdoors close to home.

Parks that serve a neighbourhood

Neighbourhood parks are designed to serve residents within a specific neighbourhood and are typically located within a five- to ten-minute walking distance (approximately 400 to 800 metres) of nearby homes. These parks are often situated in quieter residential areas and are generally less than one hectare in size. Neighbourhood parks usually focus on passive recreation and play opportunities for children rather than organized sports. As a result, they typically do not include large sports facilities or extensive amenities. Common features include playgrounds, benches, picnic tables, and open areas that allow for informal or free play. Ideally, neighbourhood parks should also be located near other public spaces to help create a connected network of accessible community areas.



Neighbourhood park, Quito, Ecuador

These are only three examples of park typologies. Many park classification systems include additional types of parks, such as district parks, mini parks, parklets (small recreational areas created by converting space otherwise used for parking one or more cars), and public squares. Park typology policies are important because cities should provide a range of park experiences to meet the diverse needs of residents and visitors. Local governments should therefore develop park classification systems that reflect local conditions, priorities, and community input.

POLICY LANGUAGE TIPS

Example of policy language that could go into a **Parks Classification System**:

“The City shall develop a system of parks that provide a wide variety of user experiences following the Parks Classification System:

District Park

- *Service Area Radius: City- and district-wide*
- *Uses: Multi-use, passive and active recreation, major sports facilities and/or tournament level fields*
- *Size: 10ha minimum*

Community Park

- *Service Area Radius: Community-wide (as determined by planning area)*
- *Uses: Range of passive and active recreational uses, which may include a community building or field house*
- *Size: 3.2ha minimum to 10ha maximum*

Neighbourhood Park

- *Service Area Radius: Approximately 10-minute (or 800m) walking distance*
- *Uses: Range of passive and active recreational uses*
- *Size: 1.2ha minimum to 3.2ha maximum”*

Shortened excerpt from: **The City of Ottawa’s Park and Pathway Development Manual.**

Location Policies

How parks are distributed within a city strongly influences residents' access to open public spaces. Research suggests that park proximity plays a major role in park use and in people's decisions about whether to visit a park.³⁷ The farther away or less accessible a park is, the less likely people are to use it.

Cities around the world have established targets to improve residents' access to parks and green spaces. For example, Singapore's City in a Garden strategy aims for 85% of residents to live within 400 metres of a park by 2030. Sydney has set a goal that residents be within a 400-metre walking distance of a park, while Vancouver aims to ensure that residents are within a five-minute walk of a green space. In Stockholm, approximately 90% of residents live within 300 metres of a public green space, and 71% live within 200 metres.³⁸

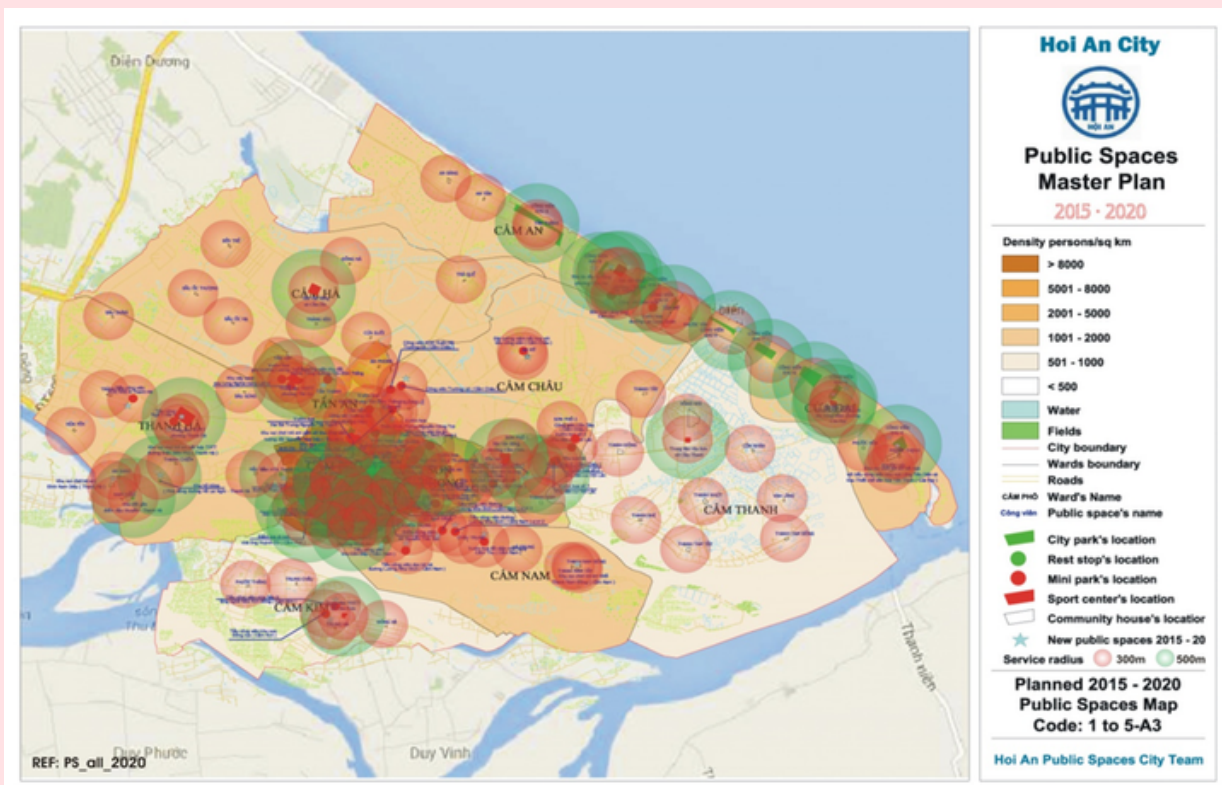
Location policies within a Park Master Plan or Strategy help cities assess the distribution of existing parks and identify areas where additional parks are needed. When a potential park site is identified, it should be mapped within the Master Plan or Strategy and designated for future park use. Clearly identifying and protecting these sites through policy helps ensure that the land remains reserved for park development.

Additionally, unused city-owned land often presents a clear opportunity for future park development. However, identifying suitable space can be challenging in densely built cities where most land has already been developed. In these cases, cities may need to consider alternative locations and creative approaches to expanding access to parks.

For example, the city of Hoi An identified neighbourhood community centres, which are places where residents regularly gather, as suitable locations for adding playgrounds for local children. Many cities have also begun co-locating parks with public schools. In Carlisle, Pennsylvania (USA), the city government adopted a policy allowing school facilities to be used as parks and playgrounds. Schoolyards often provide large open spaces, play and sports equipment, and are typically distributed throughout communities, making them well suited to help meet local recreational needs.³⁹

Public Spaces Master Plan in Hoi An

The city of Hoi An, Vietnam developed their [Public Spaces Master Plan](#) in 2015. The Master Plan was developed using a public consultation process with over 600 residents and community groups participating. The city identified different prospective park sites that would ensure that a park will be present within 300 m and 500 m of each resident. They also identified park sites that can serve the whole city. The plan ensured that residents of all ages are able to access open public spaces. The location policies within the Master Plan have been an important policy tool for the city, as it has helped protect them from other types of development. In a rapidly growing city such as Hoi An, it is unlikely that land would have been available for public spaces without well-developed location policies. As of 2021, the city now has 170 open public spaces with a total area of approximately 500,000 sqm, resulting in an area per capita of 5 sqm/person. This amounts to a 42% increase in public spaces over five years. Overall, open public space in Hoi An increased by 90,000 sqm, users increased to over 4000 users per day, a variety of new activities were introduced at the sites, and the sites themselves saw improved quality and accessibility.



Source: HealthBridge

Another useful strategy is to examine underused spaces within communities. Underused space refers to areas that have the potential to function as public spaces but are either not being fully used or are currently used for private purposes. Examples include parking lots, streets, areas beneath highways and overpasses, and vacant lots. Identifying and reassessing these spaces can reveal opportunities to create new parks and expand access to open public spaces within a community.

DID YOU KNOW?

Public spaces can host a wide range of activities, from street festivals and sports events to community health fairs. Combining multiple functions within public spaces can significantly enhance their usefulness and effectiveness. For example, [Watersquare Benthemplein in Rotterdam](#), serves as both a basketball court and a temporary stormwater storage facility, helping manage urban flooding while providing recreational space for residents.

Underpass Park in Toronto

The city government of Toronto has creatively made use of unused spaces to develop parks. In 2012, the government developed an urban park beneath a highway underpass. [The Underpass Park](#) features a playground, a basketball court, skateboarding ramps, and a flexible open space that can be used for community events. This is a great example of how unused urban space can be revitalized to benefit a community. Underpass Park transformed a previously underused and unsafe space beneath highway overpasses into a vibrant public park that supports recreation, community events, and cultural activities. The project also improved connectivity within the surrounding neighbourhood while creating a safer and more attractive urban environment.⁴⁰



Source: WATERFRONToronto



Tainan Spring

In Tainan, Taiwan, the underground parking area of a disused shopping mall was transformed into an open public space known as **Tainan Spring**. The site now includes a pool, green spaces, shaded seating areas, playgrounds for children, and a stage for performances. During the rainy season, the space also functions as a reservoir to help manage stormwater. In addition, the project incorporates urban art installations, further enhancing the cultural and recreational value of the site.



Source: UN-Habitat

As discussed in the section on park typology policies, different types of parks serve different needs within a community. Cities should therefore develop location policies that reflect the specific role of each type of park and consider park typology when identifying sites for future parks. As a general guideline, residents should have access to at least one neighbourhood park within a five-minute walk (approximately 400 metres) of their homes.

In addition to mapping the location of existing and planned parks, cities can include several additional considerations in their location policies:

- Parks should be located in areas that are accessible, usable, and functional for community residents;
- Parks may be co-located with, or located near, other important community destinations such as schools, libraries, places of worship, markets, and community centres;
- Parks should ideally be developed on sites with comfortable, even ground;
- Parks intended to serve the entire city should be located along major public transit routes to improve accessibility;
- Streets that provide access to parks should be safe and convenient for pedestrians and cyclists.

Such policies can help cities identify suitable land for current and future park development and provide guidance when establishing policies related to land acquisition for parks.

POLICY LANGUAGE TIPS

Example of language that could go into a land-use planning document:

“Use the following criteria when considering the suitability of potential park sites:

- *Accessibility of the site to the total community. Avoid sites that are removed from multi-modal circulation corridors;*
- *Proximity to other public facilities such as schools;*
- *Relationship to natural features (creeks, knolls, open space). Where possible, park sites should be selected to relate to natural features such as creeks or open space;*
- *Visual presence (visibility from major roadways). The park system is an integral part of the community’s image thus, the view of recreation facilities from roadways is critical not only to encourage use but to enhance the “look” of the City. Avoid creating terraces where possible, which place the park significantly above the road and provide only views of steep slopes; and*
- *Select Park sites where the configuration and slope will accommodate the proposed facilities. Limit site development constraints such as steep topography for active community and neighborhood parks. Where possible, avoid sites that are subject to strong winds.”*

Excerpt from City of Dublin’s Parks and Recreation Master Plan and can be found [here](#).

Equitable Distribution

Although parks should ideally be located within walking distance of all residents, open public spaces are often not distributed equitably within cities. In many cases, parks are concentrated in higher-income neighbourhoods, while lower-income communities are less likely to have green or open public spaces nearby.^{41,42} This limits residents' ability to benefit from the health, social, and environmental advantages that parks provide.

In addition, parks located in lower-income neighbourhoods are often of lower quality due to long-term underinvestment. Safety concerns and poor maintenance may further discourage residents from using these spaces.⁴³ When planning the location of new parks or open public spaces, governments should therefore identify and prioritize underserved communities in order to reduce gaps in access between different population groups.

+Ciudad Initiative

In Lima, Peru, lower-income districts often experience limited access to green spaces, partly because developing and maintaining green areas is costly in a desert city with minimal rainfall. Socio-spatial segregation and concerns about violence have further reduced access, as many public spaces have become fenced and tightly regulated. To address these challenges, the municipal government launched the **+Ciudad initiative** to create inclusive, high-quality plazas, parks, and street spaces that serve all residents. One example is Plaza 31, which was transformed from an underused parking lot into a vibrant gathering space for both high- and low-income residents. Following the intervention, the space recorded more than 150 users per hour during midday, compared with fewer than 49 people per day before the redevelopment.

VanPlay Parks and Recreation Strategy

As part of Vancouver's **VanPlay Parks and Recreation Strategy**, their Equity Bold Move aims to improve access to parks and other natural spaces for residents, particularly those who have historically experienced barriers to accessing public spaces. The city identified areas with limited access to parks, high demand for public spaces, and lower tree canopy coverage, and now works towards more equitable planning and distribution of investment for public space that will benefit all residents of the city.

Mobile Play Spaces in Bangladesh and Vietnam

In collaboration with HealthBridge, the Work for a Better Bangladesh (WBB) Trust and HealthBridge Vietnam have implemented mobile playgrounds to improve children's access to play spaces. In [Dhaka, Bangladesh](#), three mobile playgrounds were established in 2023, benefiting approximately 100 children per week. In Hanoi, Vietnam, a pilot initiative called [PlayStreet](#) launched in 2015, which set up a mobile playground weekly on Saturday nights in the city's Old Quarter. The playground attracted around 500 children each night. These initiatives helped increase children's physical activity while also supporting social interaction and mental well-being.

Crisis Management

Open public spaces can serve as critical assets during emergencies. During natural disasters such as earthquakes, flooding, or tsunamis, open public spaces function as safe and efficient evacuation sites. They can also support the distribution of essential emergency services and utilities, including first aid, clean water, power, and communication support. For example, after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and during the response to the 2012 Hurricane Sandy in New York City, public spaces were used as refuges for evacuees and as locations for distributing relief supplies.⁴⁴ Similarly, sports fields and parks served as gathering areas for affected residents after the Grenfell Tower fire in London in 2017.⁴⁵ These examples illustrate not only the emergency function of public spaces but also the importance of ensuring their equitable distribution across cities, so that all communities have access to safe gathering areas and emergency support when disasters occur.

Earthquake Response in Nepal

In 2015, an earthquake of mag. 7.8 hit Gorkha District northwest of Kathmandu, Nepal. It tragically caused nearly 9,000 deaths, over 100,000 injuries, and close to 800,000 damaged or destroyed houses. Local authorities used nearby open green spaces to set temporary camps away from collapsed and damaged buildings. Over 30,000 people were sheltered in the Kathmandu Valley green spaces and in thousands of other smaller shelter sites.⁴⁶

Moreover, during pandemics, open public spaces provide opportunities for people to remain physically active, support their mental well-being, and connect with nature while minimizing health risks. During the global lockdowns implemented to curb the spread of COVID-19, parks became important spaces where communities could safely spend time outdoors. Data from Canada showed that the use of public green spaces increased sharply during the first months of the pandemic and remained elevated into 2021, with most users, and nearly all park departments, reporting greater appreciation of parks and higher attendance.⁴⁷

Some key things to consider to ensure that open public spaces are optimally positioned to respond to emergencies are the following:

- Connectivity between open public spaces is crucial for effective emergency evacuation and recovery. Public spaces should be linked through safe and accessible pedestrian networks, including sidewalks, crossings, and connected pathways, so that people can move quickly and safely to these locations during an emergency. Well-connected streets and paths also allow emergency responders to access these spaces more easily and support the movement of supplies and services during response and recovery efforts.
- A range of public space types should be distributed across the city, as different emergency situations may require different kinds of spaces. Larger parks and sports fields may be suitable for temporary shelters, staging areas, or the distribution of emergency supplies, while smaller neighbourhood parks or plazas may function as nearby gathering points or first response locations. Ensuring a diversity of public space types increases a city's flexibility and capacity to respond to different emergency needs.

DID YOU KNOW?

A study in Richmond, Virginia, found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the proportion of lower-income residents visiting urban green spaces increased from 6.6% in the first week of lockdown to 9.1% in the following weeks. This finding highlights the importance of public green spaces during public health emergencies, particularly for lower-income populations who are less likely to have access to private outdoor spaces.⁴⁸

- Public spaces should be distributed equitably throughout the city so that all communities have access to safe gathering and evacuation areas during emergencies. When parks and open public spaces are concentrated in only certain parts of a city, residents in underserved neighbourhoods may have limited access to safe places during disasters or public health emergencies. An even distribution of public spaces helps ensure that all residents can reach a safe and accessible location when needed.

Design Policies

The design of parks and open public spaces is important because it shapes the activities that can take place within them. Design influences how enjoyable, safe, and comfortable a park feels for its users. Well-designed parks can reflect local culture, create attractive places for people to visit, encourage social interaction, and provide opportunities for residents to connect with nature.

Local governments can establish design policies that guide park development toward key characteristics and standards. However, the needs and preferences of park users can vary across neighbourhoods. For this reason, it is important to involve community members in the design process to ensure that parks respond to local needs and are well used by the people they are intended to serve.

Design policies within a Master Plan or Strategy should provide overall guidance on the basic elements that parks should include, based on their typology. These policies help ensure that each type of park contains appropriate features and amenities that reflect its intended use and function.

Design policies should also outline the process for designing individual parks. This includes identifying the steps that local governments should follow when planning new parks or upgrading existing ones, as well as describing how community engagement will be incorporated into the design process. Clear guidance on public participation helps ensure that park designs reflect local needs and encourage community ownership of these spaces.

Public Space Authority in Mexico City

The Public Space Authority of Mexico City (AEP, in Spanish) developed La Viga Linear Park in the eastern part of Mexico City in 2015. The park was designed so that up to 60% of its surface functions as rainwater catchment, helping to reduce flooding in surrounding neighbourhoods.⁴⁹ The collected water is then treated and reused as an alternative water source. The park is accessible on foot to approximately 30,000 residents, improving both local access to public space and urban water management.⁵⁰

Training Workshops in Argentina

UN-Habitat started a number of **training workshops** in Neuquen, Argentina on the design of public spaces based on two pillars - social inclusion and environmental sustainability. The workshops have supported professionals working in various municipalities in creating inclusive and integrated urban plans while considering sustainability standards and gender equity.

Community Engagement Process

Community involvement is essential to creating a well-designed park system. Without community input, parks may not reflect the needs or preferences of residents and may ultimately be underused. Community engagement is particularly important at two stages: during the development of the Master Plan or Strategy, when general design policies and guidelines are established, and during the design phase of individual parks.

Engaging the community in the development of overall park policies, such as a Master Plan or Strategy, helps determine what residents want from their park system. A range of methods can be used to gather input from the public, including community-wide surveys, public meetings, park observations, focus group discussions, and design charrettes. Activities that allow residents to map or illustrate their vision for a park can be especially useful in informing the design process.⁵¹

Information gathered through these methods can help authorities identify the types of activities and amenities that community members need. For example, a neighbourhood with a large elderly population may prioritize seating areas, walking paths, and quiet spaces, while a community with many families and young children may prioritize playgrounds and open areas for play.

Community involvement can be challenging, which is why it is important to create a community engagement policy as part of the Master Plan or Strategy to facilitate participation. Community engagement policies could include guiding principles such as:⁵²

- The community engagement process should be inclusive and allow all community members a reasonable opportunity to contribute. The city should look for innovative ways to engage residents of different ages, incomes, and genders, and should include people with disabilities, in order to create a balanced perspective.
- Residents should be involved as early as possible so that they have time to learn about the issue and actively participate.
- The process should be established so that residents have an opportunity to influence decisions. The process should not be designed so that residents are merely approving something that was already developed.
- The community engagement process should be designed so that residents understand their role, the level of engagement, and the outcome.
- The results of the community engagement process should be transparent and officials should be accountable to the community by providing information that is timely, accurate, easily understood, and accessible.
- The community engagement process should be designed so that residents are treated in a fair, equitable, respectful way that builds trust and respect among a variety of residents.

Park Features

A Master Plan or Strategy should also outline the park features that form the foundation for parks across the city. Identifying park features through policies or guidelines involves providing a comprehensive list of the potential features and facilities that parks may include. At the same time, these policies should remain flexible so that park designs can respond to the needs and preferences of local communities.

In general, park feature policies should.^{53,54,55}

- Ensure that parks are designed to improve the quality of life for residents of all ages, genders, abilities, and income levels;
- Be comprehensive and address different stages of design and levels of implementation;
- Allow flexibility for future renovations, upgrades, or improvements;
- Prioritize safety, including clear standards for the condition of play equipment and other facilities;
- Include provisions that enable parks to function as evacuation or gathering sites during emergencies; and
- Protect and enhance the existing natural landscape.

In addition to these general guidelines, design policies within the Master Plan or Strategy should provide more detailed guidance in several key areas, as outlined below.

KEY TOOL

Using Minecraft for Community

Engagement: UN-Habitat, in partnership with Block by Block, developed a community engagement workshop that involves using the computer game ‘Minecraft’. Minecraft is used to help community members design their own improvements to existing spaces in their city. More information on this can be found [here](#).

DEFINITION

Design Charrette:

A design charrette is a technique for consulting with stakeholders. It can involve multi-day meetings and usually involves residents, elected officials, and city staff. The purpose is to generate a design solution by integrating the ideas and interests of a diverse group of people.

Community Development from Participation to Collaboration in Japan

In Yokohama, Japan, local residents were actively involved in the urban design of their city. Municipal authorities proposed a number of projects, and community members responded by volunteering to help revitalize their neighbourhoods. This collaboration between citizens and city officials created a participatory process in which residents contributed directly to shaping their local environment. The initiative provides a strong example of how a community-led vision can be translated into practical urban improvements. More information can be found [here](#).

Mexico Recovery of Public Spaces Program

The federal government of Mexico delivered a program for the [Recovery of Public Spaces](#) in 2007, in an effort to recover damaged or abandoned public spaces. Both municipalities and the federal government funded the project. By 2012, 4500 public spaces in 350 municipalities were redeveloped, impacting over 22 million people. Over 4800 courses were delivered to encourage community safety through drug addiction prevention. Committees were developed to monitor maintenance of the spaces in neighbourhoods. Over 70% of residents responded that the program resulted in increased neighbourhood safety. This is a great example of how the government engaged with the community through offering courses to improve safety in the community.

Activities

Local governments should consider the types of activities that will take place in different types of parks. Planning parks to support a variety of activities is important because it increases the likelihood that they will be used by a wide range of residents. Well-designed parks typically include spaces for both passive and active recreation.



Exercise equipment, Bangkok, Thailand

Passive recreation areas support quieter and more relaxed activities, such as reading, talking with friends, listening to music, eating, or playing informal games. Design elements that support passive recreation include shaded areas, trees, benches, and tables. Active recreation involves more physically engaging activities, such as walking, running, cycling, and playing sports. Design elements that support active recreation may include sports fields, playgrounds and play structures, walking and cycling paths, and open fields.

Integrating opportunities for both active and passive recreation helps ensure that parks meet the needs of a diverse group of users. Providing a mix of spaces encourages interaction among community members with different interests, backgrounds, and needs. For example, older adults who visit parks to sit and socialize may share the space with children playing on playgrounds or families using open areas for recreation. To ensure that parks are welcoming and accessible to all residents, they should include amenities and programs that appeal to people of different ages, genders, abilities, and income levels.

The Master Plan or Strategy should include broad policies or guidelines that outline the types of activities typically associated with each type of park, as well as the facilities and amenities needed to support those uses. These policies should be informed by community-wide consultation to identify the types of activities that residents value and would like to see in their park system.

When developing design policies, it is also important to consider the equitable distribution of activities across the city, since not every park will be able to accommodate all types of uses. Ensuring that different activities are available across the broader park system helps provide residents with access to a variety of recreational opportunities. In addition, the specific activities included in an individual park should be determined through the community engagement process with local residents, as outlined in the Master Plan or Strategy.

Inclusive

It is important that parks are designed so that all users, regardless of ability, can access and use them. Inclusive parks create opportunities for people with different abilities to play, interact, and spend time together. By ensuring accessibility and thoughtful design, parks can support people living with disabilities in participating in community life, helping foster inclusion rather than marginalization.⁵⁶

Universal design is an approach that supports this goal by focusing on creating spaces that meet the needs of the greatest number of people. Rather than providing separate features for people with disabilities, universal design aims to ensure that most spaces and facilities can be used by everyone. Key features include:⁵⁷

- Surface materials such as pour-in-place rubber surfacing, rubber tiles, or crushed rubber products under play equipment. Sand and gravel are generally not suitable because they are difficult for people using mobility devices, such as wheelchairs, to navigate. However, sand can be used in combination with other accessible surfaces for pathways.
- Walkways should be constructed with firm and stable materials, such as asphalt, concrete, or pavers, allowing people using mobility devices to move easily throughout the park.
- Ramps and curb cuts should be provided wherever there are changes in elevation, such as steps or raised surfaces.
- Different surface textures can be used throughout the park to create zones and edges that help improve navigation for people with sensory impairments.
- Entry points to the park and to park features should be flush and easily accessible for people using mobility devices. Where this is not possible, ramps should be provided to ensure access.
- Amenities such as tables, trash bins, and drinking fountains should be designed to allow universal access so that people using mobility devices can comfortably use them.
- Playground equipment should provide a range of sensory and play experiences so that children with different abilities can participate.

KEY TOOL

The [Inclusive Healthy Places Framework](#) was developed by the Robert Wood Johnson Framework and the Gehl Institute, along with a group of global advisors. This framework acts as a tool for supporting health equity through evaluating and creating healthy, inclusive public places. This framework can be used to design spaces for all community members.

The Master Plan or Strategy should reference the city's existing universal or inclusive design guidelines. If such guidelines do not already exist, the Master Plan or Strategy should establish universal or inclusive design standards that all parks are required to follow.

Aesthetics

The appearance of a park is an important aspect of the design process. Research shows that aesthetics play a significant role in whether people choose to visit and use parks.⁵⁸ Parks that appear unattractive or poorly maintained may create the perception that they are unsafe, which can further discourage visitation. Design elements such as trees and gardens, public art, painted walls, and well-designed walkways can all contribute to the visual appeal of a park. Maintaining cleanliness and order is also an important component of park aesthetics, although this aspect is typically addressed through park management practices discussed in the management section.

A Master Plan or Strategy should include broad policies and guidelines that address park aesthetics and reference the community engagement process. Involving residents in identifying preferred design features helps ensure that parks reflect local preferences and are appealing to the people who use them.

Re-Designing Parks in Nagpur

In Nagpur, India, ESAF worked with the local community to re-design a community park. Simple changes to the design were made including painting the walls, creating a walkway, repositioning the seating and fixing the equipment. As a result, the park saw a 775% increase in the number of children playing. Prior to the improvements none of the children playing in the park were girls. Following the improvements, more than 50% of the children playing were girls, suggesting the increased feeling of safety in the space.

+Ciudad Initiative

The **+Ciudad initiative** led by the municipal government of Lima aimed to develop inclusive, high-quality plazas, parks, and street spaces that serve all residents. One example is Plaza 31, which was previously an underused parking lot. The site was redesigned to include green spaces, more than 30 newly planted trees, free wireless internet access, and benches and resting areas accessible to people with disabilities. Following the intervention, the space recorded 150–249 users per hour during midday, compared with fewer than 49 people per day before the redesign.

Entrances and Pathways

Entrances and pathways maximize accessibility for park visitors. Having multiple entrances greatly increases park attendance and visitation. If a park only has one entrance, this can considerably reduce the desirability of a park as fewer entrances may force some visitors to travel farther.⁵⁹ Additionally, pathways connect different areas of the park and create a clear passageway for visitors to use, which further enhances accessibility.⁶⁰ In Dhaka, Bangladesh, playing fields are available in parts of the city but are typically only used by boys and young men to play cricket. The addition of a paved pathway around a playing field encouraged women to use the field as a place for morning and evening walks, thus increasing the utility of the park and its variety of users.⁶¹ The presence of a paved pathway is also important in areas where public spaces are frequently flooded and thus otherwise unusable.



City park, Dhaka, Bangladesh

The Master Plan or Strategy should address issues such as ensuring there are multiple entrances and that those entrances are accessible for people using mobility devices such as wheelchairs. The Park Master Plan or Strategy should also reference the community engagement process for determining the location of both entrances and pathways at specific parks.

Signage

Signage is important when developing a local park, as it increases park safety and allows visitors to be aware of their surroundings. Signage at park entrances should be considered necessary for all parks, so park visitors know where they are and the name of the park they are visiting.⁶² Signage should also be accessible to people with visual impairments.



Signage in Hoi An, Vietnam

Lighting

Lighting is important for parks as it allows them to be used during the evening. Lighting can be used as a safety measure, as it can deter criminal activity and provide security to those using the park at night.⁶³ It is important that lighting be pedestrian-focused and not overly intense, as strong lights can be a deterrent to park use and create pools of darkness. It is encouraged to have subtle lighting throughout the park, rather than harsh lighting in a few areas. The Master Plan or Strategy should identify the importance of lighting in parks and reference the community engagement process in determining where lighting should be located.

Climate Resilient Design

The growing threat of climate change presents ongoing challenges for cities. How parks and open public spaces are designed can play an important role in addressing these environmental concerns. They can help reduce emissions that contribute to air pollution and climate change while also improving urban environmental conditions. Parks and open public spaces often contain green elements such as trees, flowers, and other vegetation. In addition to enhancing visual appeal, trees and greenery absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen, helping improve air quality and mitigate the effects of carbon emissions. Green spaces also contribute to the management and reduction of natural hazards such as flooding and landslides.⁶⁴ Through thoughtful design, parks can incorporate nature-based solutions, which are approaches that use natural systems and processes to address environmental challenges while also providing social and economic benefits. By integrating these strategies in their design, parks can help cities improve resilience to climate change while enhancing the quality of urban environments.⁶⁵

Green Infrastructure First Policies

Green Infrastructure First Policies, recommended by the Greenbelt Foundation and the Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition, prioritize investments in green infrastructure during development, maintenance, and infrastructure replacement projects. Under this approach, natural or green solutions are considered before traditional grey infrastructure. Similar policies have been implemented in Maryland and Washington in the United States, where developers are required to demonstrate that they have incorporated green infrastructure solutions to the greatest extent possible before turning to conventional stormwater management systems. This approach can also be applied to parks, which often function as important components of urban green infrastructure by helping manage stormwater, improve air quality, and support climate resilience.

Edinburgh's Climate Ready Plan

An important strategy within **Edinburgh's Climate Ready Plan** (2024-2030) is the Green Blue Network. It is a set of 'interconnected green and blue spaces in a given area, and can include parks, woodlands, rivers and waterways, rain gardens and tree-lined streets'. Edinburgh's Green Blue Network will support biodiversity and restorations, provide access to green space to surrounding communities, and improve resilience.

Parks can be designed to help reduce the heat island effect. The heat island effect describes an overall increase in temperature in urban areas compared to rural areas. This is due to higher levels of paved surfaces and less greenery and trees in cities than in rural areas. Master Plans and Strategies can include provisions that require parks to combat the heat island effect by including trees and vegetation, which can lower the overall temperature.^{66,67} In particular, since trees are a critical component of green infrastructure in open public spaces, policy can significantly benefit parks and other public spaces by ensuring that the tree heritage within them is protected and properly managed. In addition, parks and open spaces can also be designed to alleviate the impacts of flooding and other natural disasters.

KEY TOOL

The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and Peel Region developed the **Urban Forest Best Practice Guide**, which focus on the importance of investing in an urban forest. It provides a framework and principles for urban forest adaptation and fostering biodiversity.

Lowering City Temperatures in Addis Ababa

In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, researchers from the University of Copenhagen examined the role of urban parks in reducing the urban heat island effect. Their study found that parks with greater tree canopy cover were the most effective at lowering temperatures. Trees provide shade that can significantly reduce temperatures in parks and surrounding urban areas. The researchers found that for every one percent increase in tree canopy cover, the temperature decreased by approximately 0.02°C. The study also found that larger and more open park spaces contributed to lower temperatures. Parks that are less congested and have fewer built obstacles allow for better air circulation, which further helps reduce heat levels.⁶⁸

Trees for Life Master Plan

In Barcelona, Spain, more than 80% of municipal land has already been developed or has the potential to be developed, making the protection of green infrastructure particularly important. A study conducted in 2009 estimated that the city contains over 1.4 million trees, covering approximately 25.2% of the city's land area. To manage and protect this resource, the city developed the [**Trees for Life Master Plan**](#) 2017–2037. The plan establishes clear guidelines for the planning, management, and conservation of the city's tree heritage, with the goal of supporting a healthier urban environment for both current and future residents. The policy applies to all trees across the city, including those located along streets, in parks, and in both public and private spaces.

Street Tree Management and Development Plan

HealthBridge Vietnam is helping to develop a comprehensive Urban Green Space Development Strategy that includes a Street Tree Management and Development Plan. This plan will guide actions involving government agencies, professional organizations and local communities. Its objectives will include expanding tree canopy cover, increasing the use of suitable and native tree species, improving biodiversity, supporting healthier and more walkable streets, promoting active mobility, fostering social interaction, ensuring consistent management practices, and strengthening the unique character and identity of different areas within cities.⁷⁰

POLICY LANGUAGE TIPS

Copenhagen's Climate Adaptation Plan states that:

"A greener Copenhagen is better equipped for the climate of the future" and proposes three activities.

- **Preserve and care for existing green areas:** *Copenhagen has many parks of great value, areas of natural interest and private and public green areas and gardens. Changes and improvements must contribute to climate adaptation of the city, highlighting the identity of individual sites and offering interesting and valuable experiences and activities to Copenhageners.*
- **Supplement the City with more green and blue surfaces:** *Trees, green roofs and facades, water gardens and underground basins, gardens etc. can contribute to adapting the climate while revitalising the schools, institutions, backyards, public spaces, streets or neighbourhoods at the same time.*
- **Create coherent green networks:** *A green network can consist of trees, green roofs and façades, gardens, beds and green backyards. For the city as a whole, it is about creating coherence between the city's large green places and blue areas. Green networks can contribute to creating attractive links between Copenhageners and their natural surroundings, contributing to the local dissipation of rainwater and improving the urban climate."*

Excerpt from: European Garden Heritage Network and can be found [here](#).

Beddagana Wetland

In Colombo, Sri Lanka, flooding has become a significant concern due to limited systematic urban planning and the loss of wetlands and other ecologically sensitive areas to urban development. In response the Beddagana Wetland in Sri Jayawardenapura Kotte was redeveloped to conserve wetland ecosystems while also supporting flood retention, biodiversity protection, and public recreation. Opened to the public in 2016, the wetland area was organized into four ecological zones. These include wader scrapes, which are man-made ponds designed to collect rainwater and attract wading birds, along with birdwatching areas, boardwalks, information centres, and walking trails. Accessibility to the park was improved through upgrades to nearby Nippon Road and the addition of pedestrian pathways. The project has also included education and awareness programs that have reached approximately 2,000 students. Between 2015 and 2018, the site recorded around 160,000 visitors. More than 200 species have been preserved within this urban ecosystem, and flooding in nearby areas has been reduced as the wetland park helps absorb stormwater runoff.



Source: World Bank Group

Parks that Help with Flooding in Copenhagen

Tåsinge Plads is a park in Copenhagen that plays an important part in this seaside city's plan to survive the effects of climate change. During heavy rains, the flowerbeds fill with water and wait to drain until the storm runoff subsides. The upside-down umbrellas collect water to be used later to water nearby vegetation. Clever landscaping directs stormwater down into large underground water storage tanks. Above those tanks are bouncy floor panels that children love to jump on. When they do, the energy from their feet pumps water through the pipes below. The tarmac has been torn up and the greenery reduces the urban-heat island effect.



Source: Landezine

POLICY LANGUAGE TIPS

Example of wording that can be used in a Design Guideline:

“Open Public Spaces shall be designed to ensure (note: “garden” here refers to open public spaces):

A) Safety, security and privacy: *Outdoor spaces serve people who may be vulnerable in one way or another. All aspects of the outdoor space must ensure users’ physical and emotional safety and security.*

B) Accessibility: *Ensuring safe and comfortable use for all people regardless of age or ability is essential. The design should adhere to Universal Design (UD) principles as much as possible.*

C) Physical and emotional comfort: *The overall goal is to create an environment in which people feel cared for and nurtured. When people are physically and emotionally comfortable, they tend to stay in a garden longer and benefit more from the experience. The design should provide safe and comfortable places to walk and sit as well as create opportunities for social connection.*

D) Engagement with nature: *Research has shown that connection to nature is one of the most effective forms of positive distraction. Planting, natural materials and sounds, and the presence of water are some examples of positive natural distractions.*

E) Maintenance and sustainability: *All therapeutic gardens have to be properly maintained to function as safe, useful and enjoyable spaces for their target users. Damaged garden elements such as paving or seats can compromise users’ safety. Also, plants that are not properly maintained may affect the mood of users and create a negative experience towards the garden. As much as possible, garden design should be ecologically sustainable by using recycled materials, tapping on green infrastructure for stormwater management, and choosing plants that require low maintenance.”*

Excerpt from Design Guidelines for Therapeutic Gardens in Singapore can be found [here](#).

Emergency Response Capacity

During crises such as pandemics open public spaces can provide ample space for quick establishment of temporary and secondary facilities (e.g. for health care and for food and resource distribution) and can provide essential services such as clean bathroom facilities and water fountains, particularly to marginalized communities.⁷¹ When designing a space, authorities should consider the flexibility, multi-functionality, and adaptability of a space. A resilient space can adapt quickly (e.g. ability to set up temporary food markets/vendors or pop-up community health tents).⁷³ To be prepared in the case of a pandemic, public spaces should be designed in such a way to allow for physical distancing, and managers must be ready to facilitate frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces such as doors, handles, or benches, and ensure that the spaces remain open for visitors.⁷⁴

DID YOU KNOW?

It is recommended to leave parks and open public spaces open in urban as well as rural areas during public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, with appropriate scheduling of visitors and physical distancing facilitated.⁷²

MABELLEArts Food Pantry Program

The [MABELLEArts Food Pantry Program](#) launched in Toronto during the COVID-19 pandemic and was a vital service that delivered nutritious food to a vulnerable community. The pantry was easily set up as makeshift booths in a parkette within the Mabelle Avenue neighbourhood and served fresh produce and dried goods to over 400 households in their time of need.⁷⁵

Park Site Plan

Site plans are detailed drawings of a site that indicate exactly where each element of the park will be placed within the park boundaries. The site plan outlines the materials to be used, the types of greenery to be planted and the equipment that is needed. Site plan development typically goes through several drafts, each of which are shared with the community in consultation. The Master Plan or Strategy should require a site plan for all park development and redevelopment.

POLICY LANGUAGE TIPS

Example of wording that can be used in a Master Plan or Strategy:

“Planning

- *Involve all stakeholders in the planning and design process, including users, caregivers and healthcare staff, to ensure their needs and concerns are considered. Multiple perspectives help to maximise the value of the garden.*
- *Identify users’ cultural backgrounds, age groups, and extent of their illnesses to better design for their needs.*
- *Consider programming in tandem with the planning, design and development of the garden.*

Site Planning shall include:

- *Site selection information such as accessibility, vicinity, terrain, noise, shade, landscape, and ventilation.*
- *Layout information such as zoning, boundaries, and visibility.*
- *Structure information such as entrances, accessibility for differently abled, amenities, paving, seating, and shade and shadow.*
- *Aesthetic information such as signage, art, landscaping.”*

Excerpt from: Design Guidelines for Therapeutic Gardens in Singapore can be found [here](#).

Management Policies

A critical element that should be addressed in a Master Plan or Strategy is the management of parks after they are built. Effective maintenance is essential to the long-term success of parks and open public spaces. When parks are poorly maintained, their quality declines and visitation tends to decrease. Regular maintenance also helps reduce overall costs over time. By maintaining facilities, equipment, and landscaping on a routine basis, cities can prevent deterioration and avoid more expensive repairs, major renovations, or the need to replace infrastructure prematurely. Consistent maintenance therefore supports both the usability and the financial sustainability of parks.⁷⁶

Local governments should take an active role in establishing management policies and clearly identify the city department responsible for park management and maintenance. Defining responsibilities helps ensure accountability and supports the consistent upkeep of parks and open public spaces.

When developing management plans, city governments generally have two options. They may create a general management plan that applies to all parks across the city, or they may develop management plans that vary according to park typology. In the latter approach, different types of parks, such as city parks, community parks, or neighbourhood parks, may have distinct management practices that reflect their size, level of use, and the types of facilities they contain.

City-Wide Management Plans

Although basic in nature, city-wide management plans and policies can be highly beneficial for both city governments and local communities. Local governments may choose to adopt this type of approach when maintenance needs across parks are relatively similar. A single management framework can help ensure consistency in maintenance standards, simplify coordination, and make it easier to allocate resources.

City-wide management plans are often particularly effective in smaller communities, where the number and diversity of parks may be limited. In these contexts, a unified approach can provide clear guidance for park management without requiring separate policies for different park types.

Management policies in the Master Plan or Strategy should include information about:

- Hiring staff or volunteers for maintenance;
- Maintaining the park's aesthetics including trees, plants, and vegetation;
- Recommending renovations, including when, where, and what renovations should be conducted;
- Providing information about the park's facilities and amenities, as well as their various uses; and managing and collecting waste.

These action areas should form the foundation of all management policies. They provide the basic guidance needed to develop effective management plans and help ensure that parks are properly maintained over time. By addressing these core areas, cities can protect the integrity, functionality, and long-term value of local parks.

POLICY LANGUAGE TIPS

Example of policies that can go into a **City-Wide Management Plan**:

“The City is responsible for the maintenance of public parks within the geographical boundaries of the City. This maintenance responsibility includes, but is not limited to, the regularly scheduled parks maintenance activities consistent with the Parks Plan. The City will provide this service on a priority basis in a cost-effective manner, keeping in mind safety, budgets, personnel and environmental concerns.

Responsibilities: City Council shall:

- Set and adopt the Parks Maintenance Budgets;
- Set and adopt the levels of service; and
- Set and adopt the Priority Parks List on a periodic basis.

Service Levels: The service objective is to maintain a generally neat and orderly appearance, adapted to and tolerant of expected wear and tear. Plants and lawns are healthy. Lawns are mowed and trimmed to within a 2” to 2½” (51 mm to 64 mm) height range. Weeds and debris are kept to acceptable levels within the limits of regular visits. Routine maintenance is of moderate frequency and intensity, with regular monitoring to avoid serious deterioration.

Maintenance of Trees and Gardens: Maintenance of trees and gardens is carried out in order to maintain an aesthetic level consistent with park priority level, to preserve the health of plantings and to ensure public safety. Maintenance of trees and gardens includes: inspection; soil testing, City compost application and fertilization; mulching; cultivation; pest control; planting; pruning; repair; transplanting; weed control; deadheading; and interior plant care.

Litter Pickup: Litter pickup is carried out in order to maintain an aesthetic level consistent to ensure public safety. Litter pickup includes pickup and removal of debris on the park grounds. Litter pickup involving emptying of waste containers, will be conducted by Public Works.

General Maintenance: General maintenance is carried out in order to maintain an aesthetic level consistent with park priority level, to maintain park facilities and fixtures in good repair and to ensure public safety. General maintenance includes: inspection; painting/staining furniture; repair/replacement of structures; and repair of landscape lighting.”

Excerpt from: City of Whitehorse Park Maintenance Policy and can be found [here](#).

Management Plans by Park Type

If the types of parks within a city are diverse and differ significantly in size, use, and facilities, city governments may consider developing management policies that differentiate maintenance needs by park type. This approach is often particularly useful in larger metropolitan areas, where parks vary widely in function and scale.

In management plans organized by park type, the characteristics and typical uses of each park will influence how frequently maintenance activities are required. This may include how often grass, trees, and other vegetation need to be maintained, how frequently equipment may need repair or replacement, how waste management will be handled, and the level of staffing required to support park operations. Policies should therefore outline the core management standards that apply to all parks while also identifying how maintenance practices may vary across different park types.

POLICY LANGUAGE TIPS

Example of language that could be used in a Park Typology Management Plan:

“Community Parks: *Community parks require a significant amount of maintenance, and therefore should be continuously and consistently monitored to upkeep the park*

- *Waste collection should occur daily in the warmer months*
- *Grass and other vegetation must be maintained weekly*
- *If washrooms are included within a park, its replacement and maintenance should be done frequently, but how frequently can vary between park*

Neighbourhood Parks: *If renovations or redesigns are required, be sure to involve the community for extensive input*

- *Grass and other vegetation must be maintained weekly*
- *Waste collection should occur daily in the warmer months*
- *Trash and waste bins should be maintained regularly, and should be easily accessible for the general public*

Athletic Parks: *Regularly upgrade or renovate washrooms and change room receptacles where included in athletic parks*

- *Continuously work with partners and sports teams to update schedules and to prevent conflicts*
- *Resurface asphalt areas used for sport regularly in order to upkeep the park*
- *Hire staff to frequently cut grass and maintain fields and sports areas”*

Excerpt from: City of Vernon Parks Master Plan and can be found [here](#)

Management Through Community Engagement

City governments can strengthen community engagement through the maintenance and stewardship of local parks. Because local residents are often the most frequent users of these spaces, they can play an important role in helping manage and care for them. In some cases, particularly where parks are underused or neglected, community members may take the initiative to become involved in maintaining these spaces in order to preserve an important community asset.

In certain situations, city governments may also choose to transfer responsibility for managing parkland to community groups. This can be done through leasing or licensing arrangements that give local organizations the right to manage the park. Such arrangements can help build local capacity by creating employment opportunities, strengthening skills, and supporting local livelihoods. They can also increase community engagement and foster a stronger sense of ownership and belonging among residents who use and care for the park.⁷⁷

KEY TOOL

Building Neighbourhood Playgrounds: Lessons from the Field is a resource produced by Action for the City and HealthBridge that describes the process community organizations can take to help design and maintain their playgrounds with community input and involvement. The full resource can be found [here](#).

Funding Policies

Establishing a clear and adequate funding strategy is an important component of implementing a Master Plan or Strategy. Without sufficient financial resources, it becomes much more difficult to design, develop, and maintain parks effectively. Funding policies should therefore be developed to secure resources from reliable and consistent sources. Ideally, funding should come from multiple levels of government, including local and regional or national authorities.

Local governments play a particularly important role in financing parks and open public spaces. The level of funding allocated to parks can vary depending on local priorities, resources, and community needs.

Traditional City Government Funding

Typically, local governments allocate specific funding for parks through their municipal budget process.⁷⁸ The budget is usually funded through a mix of municipal taxation and monetary transfers from the national government. The city government then determines the distribution and amount of funds allocated for parks. This is the most common funding method when it comes to public spaces.

Spending on Parks and Recreation in the United States

The Trust for Public Land in the United States produces a report every year called City Park Facts, which is a document that describes the parks and recreation systems in the 100 most populous cities in the US. This document shows total investment on parks and recreation for these cities. This reflects landscaping, tree maintenance, trash removal, and capital spending which includes one-time items such as land acquisition and construction costs. In 2025, \$12.2 billion was invested, ranging from \$44 in Chula Vista, CA to \$507 Buffalo, NY per capita, with the average being \$192 per capita. The document can be found [here](#).

Multi-Agency Public Sector Funding

Multi-Agency public sector funding refers to local governments acquiring funds from different agencies within the federal government as well as the non-profit and private sector.⁷⁹ In this instance, city governments seek funding from different sources while simultaneously providing their own funding for parks.

Multi-Agency Funding in England

Near London, England, the Colne Valley Regional Park is funded by various local sources and partnerships. Some of the partnerships include private organizations, various agencies including the Environmental Agency, and English Nature. The park also uses traditional local government funding to finance the park. However, multi-agency funding has significantly increased funding allocated for the regional park. More information can be found [here](#).

Taxation Initiatives

Funding through taxation initiatives involves local governments levying specific taxes to support the development and maintenance of parks.⁸⁰ This approach can be an effective way to secure stable funding, as tax revenues tend to provide a reliable and consistent source of income. However, strong community support is often necessary for such initiatives, since residents are indirectly contributing to park development through their taxes. In addition, parks and other green spaces often increase land and property values in surrounding areas. The additional revenues generated from higher property values—such as through property taxes—can be reinvested to further support the development and maintenance of open public spaces throughout the city.⁸¹

ecoParq in Mexico City

Mexico City enacted a parking management system, introducing 426 multi-space meters to streets where parking had previously been free. The new system is branded **ecoParq** underscoring the environmental benefits of better parking pricing and management. Importantly, the funding goes to improvements in the neighbourhood where the meters are located, so that residents can see direct benefits from the program. The meters help regulate 6,000 parking spaces and have brought dramatic changes to the neighbourhood. The Public Space Authority administers the 30% of revenues earmarked for public space improvements. EcoParq is helping to bring more certainty to how public space is managed.

Planning and Development Agreements

Park funding can also be secured through planning and development agreements. Under these arrangements, local governments may require developers to contribute funding for parks or to construct park spaces as a condition of approval for a development project. This approach involves collaboration between the public and private sectors and can help ensure that new development contributes to the provision of public spaces.

Planning and development agreements can be particularly useful when public sector funding is limited. To implement this approach, the requirement for park contributions should be clearly outlined in the local government's land-use planning framework, such as an official plan or comprehensive plan. This helps ensure that expectations for park development are transparent and consistently applied during the development approval process.

Development Fees in Toronto

The City of Toronto includes a park fee for developers in their Official Plan. In new housing or commercial developments or redevelopments, developers and builders are required to either set aside a certain amount of land for parkland (**Parkland Dedication**) or alternatively they can pay cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication. When they pay the fee in lieu of parkland dedication, the fee is called a Parks Levy Fee. These fees are paid prior to the issuance of the first building permit.

Privately-Owned Publicly Accessible Spaces

The City of Toronto's program called **Privately-Owned Publicly Accessible Spaces** (POPS) creates a specific type of open space where, although it is privately-owned, it is publicly accessible. The City of Toronto negotiates with private developers to include POPS in their development application and review process.

Income-Generating Opportunities

Sponsorship from private companies and businesses can provide income-generating opportunities for cities to fund park development and maintenance.⁸² Income generating opportunities can include small shops, vendors, and cafes. Sponsorship does not necessarily have to be monetary and can include the management of a specific area or park. In order to access funding through income-generating opportunities, local governments typically grant licenses to private companies. It is important that any such agreements avoid the use of advertising by private companies, otherwise this activity essentially involves leasing public lands for private advertising. Any acknowledgement of the funding should be limited to small, inconspicuous signs.



City park, Toronto, Canada

Local Vendors in Surakarta

In Surakarta, Indonesia, the city government formally recognizes street vendors as local businesses that can provide income-generating opportunities for local public spaces. Street vendors provide food to the public and increase tourism in the city while simultaneously contributing to economic growth. By providing informal vendors with formal public spaces to work, the city government is able to increase economic opportunity while maintaining public spaces. This initiative also resulted in increased government revenue from street vendors. More information can be found [here](#).

Endowments

Endowments are another reliable source of income that can result in long-term or permanent funding.⁸³ Endowments are typically income-generating assets, such as stocks, investments, or income-generating property, where the interest and income from these investments are used for community-focused activities such as public parks. Fundraising and donation sources can be used to develop an endowment.

Endowment for Central Park in New York City

The [Central Park Conservancy](#) is a not-for-profit organization in New York City developed by local community members in order to enhance, improve, and maintain Central Park. The organization received nearly \$400 million in 2024 from its endowment⁸⁴, and this came from a variety of sources including corporations, organizations, foundations, and donations collected from local community residents. On average, the Conservancy supplies 75% of Central Park's annual budget.

Partnerships

Developing partnerships is another way that local governments can raise resources to develop and maintain parks.⁸⁵ Partnerships can include local government, local residents, and local and international organizations working together to develop and maintain parks. Such partnerships can be an excellent source of resources by providing volunteers, specialists, and materials.

Partnerships in Kenya

The **Kounkuey Design Initiative** (KDI) was founded in Nairobi, Kenya in 2006 and is a not-for-profit international partnership dedicated to improving liveability conditions. The partnership employs engineers, urban planners, architects and community members. KDI works collaboratively with local community residents to design and plan out various improvements to the city. Nairobi's largest informal settlement, Kibera, is prone to flooding. Despite this, the settlement is frequently used as a play space for children and an area for local residents to socialize and gather. The partnership developed between community members and KDI greatly improved the settlement. Community input was used to create technological and architectural designs, which in turn resulted in an upgraded drainage channel, a playground for children to safely play, and a community centre and health clinic for the local residents. KDI continues to develop community infrastructure, and has expanded to other counties in Kenya, engages in collaborative projects in Eastern and Southern Africa, and South Asia, and has additional offices in the U.S. and Sweden.⁸⁶

Voluntary Sector Involvement

Although the voluntary and not-for-profit sector may not be able to provide monetary funds, the voluntary sector can be an excellent source of labour and management.⁸⁷ Most voluntary organizations include volunteers from the local community who can assist with park construction and maintenance. As well, volunteers and not-for-profit organizations can help organize events to generate fundraising sources. Volunteers can provide a multitude of services and support, including supervising the park and cleaning and managing the park.

Community Involvement in Hoi An

In Hoi An, Vietnam, local residents volunteered to help develop a neighbourhood playground for the children of the community. The community members contributed to the park's maintenance fund by providing various services to the playground. The community members also participated in managing the park and in local meetings, and contributed ideas regarding the design of the playground. Additionally, community residents were directly involved in physically building the park. Through extensive community involvement, the city government was able to rally local residents as volunteers, and use their abilities and local knowledge to improve the conditions of the playground. More information can be found [here](#).

Conclusion

Parks and open public spaces play a vital role in communities. They encourage physical activity and recreation, create opportunities for social interaction, attract visitors, and provide safe places for children to play. These spaces also enhance the visual character of cities by introducing greenery such as trees, gardens, and other vegetation. In addition, parks provide important environmental benefits, including helping reduce the urban heat island effect and supporting efforts to lower emissions associated with air pollution and climate change. For these and many other reasons, the development and maintenance of parks should be a priority for governments.

Both national and local governments play important roles in supporting urban parks and open public spaces. For parks to be successful, policies and guidelines are needed across several areas, including location, design, funding, management, and environmental considerations. These policy areas are interconnected and should complement one another within an overall policy framework. Effective policy development also requires cooperation between different levels of government as well as meaningful engagement with communities. This paper has outlined a range of policy approaches that can support the development and management of urban parks and guide both national and local governments. Given the many benefits of open public spaces, governments and communities should consider them a strategic priority in efforts to create more livable cities that benefit both people and the environment.



Public square, Buenos Aires, Argentina

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