



planit**u**lsa

**parks  
and recreation**

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# chapter 8 parks and recreation

## INTRODUCTION

### Existing Parks in Tulsa

The parks systems in Tulsa set it apart from other cities in Oklahoma. Whether managed by the City of Tulsa Parks, Culture, and Recreation Department, the River Parks Authority, the Tulsa County Parks Department, or any of the private and non-profit entities managing parks in the city, the quality of our parks has led to a local culture that highly values these places. The coordination among all of these parks entities is critical for continued success.

For the City of Tulsa, the parks and recreation function is commonly known as “Tulsa Parks”. Tulsa Parks manages 135 parks covering roughly 6,553 acres. This includes the Redbud Valley Nature Preserve, two specialty centers, and six community centers with various amenities, including fitness facilities, gymnasiums, art studio space, and meeting rooms. There are 57 miles of walking trails, two skate parks, three dog parks, and five swimming pools. In addition, there are 227 sports fields (132 diamond fields and 95 rectangular fields), 99 playgrounds, 94 tennis courts, 65 basketball courts (29 full courts and 36 half courts), 8 outdoor pickleball courts, 13 water playgrounds, 18 splash pads, 96 picnic shelters, 4 golf courses, and 8 disc golf courses. All of these amenities come with capital, maintenance, and operational costs to ensure the high quality park experience desired by residents.

Tulsa County Parks Department manages seven parks, one of which is within the city limits of



Tulsa Parks staff take care of existing facilities, manage vegetation, and provide programming to children and adults alike.

Tulsa, as well as two community centers and several sections of the regional trails network. Other parks within the city limits of Tulsa not managed by the City include Guthrie Green, John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park, and private parks within subdivisions that are managed by the local homeowners association.

The River Parks Authority (RPA) operates a public park system, known as River Parks, along the banks of the Arkansas River in Tulsa. RPA is governed by a seven-member Board of Trustees, with three City of Tulsa appointees, three Tulsa County appointees, and one Tulsa Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (TMAPC) appointee. River Parks includes over 1,200 acres of land

that is leased or owned by RPA. RPA and the City signed a new, 50-year lease at the end of 2017 for all City-owned land that is operated as part of River Parks. River Parks’ defining feature is its extensive, multi-use recreational trail system, complemented by parking lots, restrooms, furnished rest stops, playgrounds, and an extensive collection of outdoor sculptures. Other focal points of the park include Zink Dam and Lake, 41st Street Plaza, River West Festival Park, and the Turkey Mountain Urban Wilderness. Public operating dollars are supplemented by significant private funds in the form of grants, operating reimbursements, and transfers from the River Parks Foundation, the private fundraising arm of RPA. Since its inception, over



\$100M in public and private funds have been invested in Tulsa's riverfront, enriching outdoor recreation and entertainment for all Tulsa-area residents and visitors, improving the quality of life for the community.

In 2018, Tulsa gained national recognition for the opening of [Gathering Place](#) park on Riverside Drive by the Arkansas River. Gathering Place represents the single largest gift to a community park in United States history, with \$200M coming from the George Kaiser Family Foundation, matched by \$200M from other donors, and \$65M in public contributions. In 2019, Gathering Place was voted the best city park in the country in a USA Today Reader's Choice poll, beating out parks in major cities across the country including San Diego, Boston, and Houston. Gathering Place is described as "...the ultimate expression of Tulsa's unity. A place for everyone." It has seen a groundswell of local support, and has become one of the major tourist attractions for Tulsa.

All of these assets make up the parks system in Tulsa, and the momentum of recent improvements will lead to even more activity and recognition moving forward as the benefits are spread to all parts of the city.

### One Size Does Not Fit All

While the distribution of parks throughout the city mostly provides a balanced level of access to all Tulsans, the amenities and programming that exist in each park vary significantly. As new investments are made in physical improvements and programming, all efforts should be made to tailor these to the local needs of surrounding residents. Engagement with residents through public meetings, planning, surveys, and other



Parks create opportunities for learning for people of all ages. Here Tulsa Parks staff and youth volunteers plant flowers at one of Tulsa's many parks.

approaches, should be paired with data analysis conducted internally to most efficiently and effectively improve the parks and recreation environment for all residents.

In some areas of the city, such as east Tulsa, there is a need for new park facilities altogether. Where there are opportunities for the City to acquire the needed land for new park facilities, priority should be given to locations that are highly visible and accessible. Where parks exist today in east Tulsa, major enhancements should be pursued to create [destination parks](#) that strengthen the local and surrounding community. In addition to the physical park facilities, the [programmatic opportunities](#) at parks and community centers should reflect the needs of the surrounding residents.

### Park Planning Efforts

Recent planning has occurred that will inform the future of parks and recreation in the Tulsa area, including a new Parks Master Plan adopted in 2022. Numerous public meetings in all parts of the city informed this planning process, with the goal to understand local context and what approaches fit best for a given area. This plan is particularly important for the prioritization of capital improvement funding through the 2019 Improve Our Tulsa general obligation bond election, where \$30M of funding was allocated to enhance the existing parks and recreation system. Other relevant plans include the 2015 GO Plan, which identifies where future trail facilities should be expanded or enhanced, and the Turkey Mountain Master Plan, which was commissioned in partnership between the George Kaiser Family Foundation

and the River Parks Authority as a continuation of the significant park improvements along the Arkansas River.

Planning for specific improvements has occurred at McCullough Park in east Tulsa to enhance the park space to become a destination park in an area of the city with limited park access. Where park improvements are funded through capital improvement programs, some projects include funding for new sculptures and murals, giving parks distinct character and better incorporating them into surrounding neighborhoods.

### **Parks and Recreation Priorities**

Recent planning efforts have led to the development of principles to guide decisions regarding park improvements. These principles include:

- That parks should provide opportunities for physical activity and healthful lifestyles.
- Parks should provide places for residents and community groups to gather.
- Parks should provide places for residents to have authentic encounters with nature.
- Equity and accessibility should be key components of park improvement planning, programming, outreach, and funding.

These concepts provide the framework for the approach to investments in the parks and recreation system going forward.

## **KEY IDEAS**

### **Subject Matter Experts**

The Tulsa Planning Office team met with several subject matter experts to learn more about the existing conditions of Tulsa's parks and recreation systems. These included the City of Tulsa Park, Culture, and Recreation Department, River Parks Authority, Tulsa County Parks Department, Gathering Place, and the Oklahoma State Tourism and Recreation Department. Key ideas raised in these discussions include the following:

- Parks and recreation facilities should be tailored to the specific needs of the surrounding community.
- All Tulsans should have easy access to places for recreation, gathering, and connecting with nature.
- Recreational programming should be available for all Tulsans regardless of age, income, gender, race, or language ability.
- Tulsa's parks and recreation systems should promote healthy lifestyles.
- Tulsa's parks and recreation systems should be promoted with effective marketing and outreach.
- Tulsa's parks should be a model for best practices in sustainability.
- All residents should feel safe when using Tulsa's parks and recreation facilities.

### **Community Members**

Through numerous public engagement efforts, residents of Tulsa provided a great deal of input, much of which was in alignment with what was heard from subject matter experts. Key ideas heard through community engagement include:

- Maintenance should be prioritized and accommodated in parks planning and funding.
- Tulsa park and recreational facilities should be programmed for activities and events for maximum use and enjoyment.
- Park and recreational facilities should be equally accessible to all Tulsans.
- Safety should be a top priority in Park and Recreation planning and programming, including considerations for enhanced lighting and safe pet policies.
- Parks should be clean and provide sanitary facilities for users, including rest rooms and water fountains.
- Traffic calming should be targeted around neighborhood parks.



## Goal 1

**Tulsa's parks and trails systems are enhanced and maintained through coordinated efforts and funding from public, private, non-profit, and philanthropic entities.**

Unlike many cities, Tulsa has multiple agencies that maintain and operate parks and trails in the region. Ensuring that existing services, programming, and future planning are coordinated in concert among the various park agencies will lead to a more resilient parks system that enhances quality of life for all Tulsans.

### Strategy 1.1

Maintain ongoing coordination between Tulsa Parks, River Parks Authority, Tulsa County Parks Department, Gathering Place, and other park management entities.

### Strategy 1.2

Develop a long-term and sustainable funding strategy for deferred maintenance issues, new projects, and programming needs.

### Strategy 1.3

Explore and encourage public-private partnerships for expanded and innovative park and recreational facilities.

### Strategy 1.4

Supplement park and trail maintenance programs through collaborative coordination with neighborhood and community organizations.

### Strategy 1.5

Coordinate improvements to the trails network at the regional level in collaboration with all relevant agencies.

### Strategy 1.6

Revise and develop donation processes to allow residents and local organizations to easily donate or contribute (monetarily, in-kind, etc.) to enhance parks and recreation facilities and trails across the city.







## Goal 2

### **Park and recreational assets are tailored to the specific needs of the surrounding neighborhoods and communities.**

Parks exist to enhance quality of life for the communities they serve, therefore careful consideration of surrounding neighborhood needs is crucial to maintaining this purpose. Tulsa Parks should use a data-driven approach to tailor maintenance and improvements of park facilities by recruiting nearby neighborhood organizations to provide feedback and encourage opportunities for customized enhancements.

#### **Strategy 2.1**

Develop a comprehensive list of all park assets and tailor strategies based on specific community needs.

#### **Strategy 2.2**

Engage with surrounding neighborhoods to identify specific needs for park improvements.

#### **Strategy 2.3**

Develop a comprehensive database of neighborhood associations, schools, faith-based institutions, and other community organizations to assist with engagement efforts.

#### **Strategy 2.4**

Pursue commemorative donations that reflect the contributions of Tulsans and neighbors of specific parks.

#### **Strategy 2.5**

Develop and use stormwater retention areas for parks and recreation purposes beyond the area currently served by the Tulsa Parks system.

#### **Strategy 2.6**

In areas of the city with lower rates of internet access, implement public Wi-Fi in community centers and parks.



## Goal 3

### All Tulsans have easy access to places for recreation, gathering, and connecting with nature.

Tulsa Parks should prioritize access to recreational activity and green spaces by supplementing recreational programming, exploring requirements for parks in private developments, investing in regional destinations, and by updating parks near neighborhoods experiencing growth.

#### Strategy 3.1

Coordinate with school districts to promote recreational opportunities at schools where there is low access to parks.

#### Strategy 3.2

Seek ways to increase park access in east Tulsa where the largest gaps in service exist.

#### Strategy 3.3

Encourage private parks in new development for areas of the city beyond the current area served by the Tulsa Parks system.

#### Strategy 3.4

Enhance existing regional destination parks throughout the city.

#### Strategy 3.5

Maintain and expand recreational connections between neighborhoods and the Arkansas River.

#### Strategy 3.6

Where redevelopment is occurring, evaluate the need for improvements to existing under-utilized parks facilities to serve the residents of the area.

#### Strategy 3.7

Prioritize pedestrian improvements, such as sidewalks and crosswalks, around park facilities.







## Goal 4

**Recreational programming is available for all Tulsans regardless of age, income, physical ability, gender, race, or language ability.**

In order to provide enhanced quality of life for all Tulsans, Tulsa Parks should engage with other park management organizations, hobby organizations, and athletic teams to provide robust and consistent programs for recreation focused on the inclusion of all cultural backgrounds, ages, abilities, and interests.

### Strategy 4.1

Expand programming options to appeal to all age groups.

### Strategy 4.2

Provide multilingual recreational programming.

### Strategy 4.3

Develop accessible park amenities for Tulsans that have challenges with mainstream recreational activities.

### Strategy 4.4

Work with community athletics organizations to recruit events and competitions.



## Goal 5

### Tulsa's park and recreation systems promote healthy lifestyles.

In an effort to support healthy living through Tulsa Parks, park amenities and programs should be leveraged to promote healthy lifestyle choices by offering activities, creating inviting facilities, and repurposing unused spaces for outdoor activities or access to healthy food options in underserved communities.

#### Strategy 5.1

Establish partnerships to address geographically specific health concerns throughout Tulsa.

#### Strategy 5.2

Coordinate and enhance the network and connectivity of parks, trails, and natural areas for nature-based recreation.

#### Strategy 5.3

Encourage a mix of active and passive recreation amenities in parks to facilitate varying levels of physical activity.

#### Strategy 5.4

Work with neighborhoods to repurpose vacant lots to provide access to outdoor recreation or fresh foods.

#### Strategy 5.5

Promote healthy outdoor park environments, and pursue mitigation of potential health hazards.







## Goal 6

### Marketing and communications efforts effectively promote the parks and recreation systems in Tulsa.

Tulsa Parks should work to develop a brand management and communications framework that focuses on community needs while clearly and consistently promoting park programs across all platforms. The framework should target all Tulsans as well as potential visitors at the regional and national level.

#### Strategy 6.1

Plan and promote public events at parks to encourage increased and innovative use.

#### Strategy 6.2

Facilitate robust and inclusive community engagement to identify needs and preferences of residents and neighborhoods pertaining to new parks and park improvements.

#### Strategy 6.3

Increase the availability of marketing, outreach, and informational materials in non-English languages regarding parks and recreation opportunities, particularly in geographic areas with larger concentrations of residents with limited English proficiency.

#### Strategy 6.4

Coordinate with local, state, and national tourism and recreation marketing organizations to communicate the strengths and attraction of Tulsa's city parks.

#### Strategy 6.5

Incorporate up-to-date technologies and digital platforms for reaching diverse populations, including social media.

#### Strategy 6.6

Develop a distinct brand for Tulsa Parks.



## Goal 7

### **Tulsa's parks are a model for best practices in sustainability.**

Sustainability should be prioritized in the development and restoration of Tulsa Parks including design materials, recycling facilities, and through educating park users in how they can make a positive impact. The creation of a sustainable park and trail system will not only be a model for other departments at the City of Tulsa, but for communities across the Tulsa region.

#### **Strategy 7.1**

Invest in the ecological restoration of green spaces in parks, along trails, and in undeveloped open spaces owned by the City.

#### **Strategy 7.2**

Incorporate sustainable design elements into park facility improvements.

#### **Strategy 7.3**

Provide educational opportunities for park users and program participants that focus on sustainable lifestyles and healthy ecosystems, using parks as a teaching tool.

#### **Strategy 7.4**

Promote recycling facilities in parks and along trails where appropriate.







## Goal 8

### **Tulsa's parks and trails systems are designed and operated so that all users feel safe and secure.**

Ensuring that all residents have safety and security is one of the highest priorities for the City of Tulsa. Tulsa Parks should consider every element of city park facilities with safety in mind from designing and maintaining safe environments to partnerships with local law enforcement agencies to ensure that green spaces are safe for everyone.

#### **Strategy 8.1**

Incorporate design elements into parks and trails facilities that increase safety.

#### **Strategy 8.2**

Ensure that more facilities in parks are accessible to all users.

#### **Strategy 8.3**

Work with communities and law enforcement agencies to develop approaches to maintaining public safety in parks in ways that don't cause discomfort to park system users.

#### **Strategy 8.4**

Employ maintenance techniques that reduce the risk associated with inclement weather events that may hinder normal use of parks, trails, and other facilities.

#### **Strategy 8.5**

Find opportunities and spaces where fenced, off-leash dog park amenities can be added to existing and new parks.



## Goal 9

**Decisions made for improvements, changes, or additions are backed up by data analysis to ensure investments are equitable, cost-effective, and transparent.**

Tulsa Parks should practice organizational transparency and seek public input to ensure that investments are informed by identified needs. A data-driven approach to decision making allows Tulsa Parks to make equitable, responsible, and cost-effective investments that are most beneficial for all residents.

### Strategy 9.1

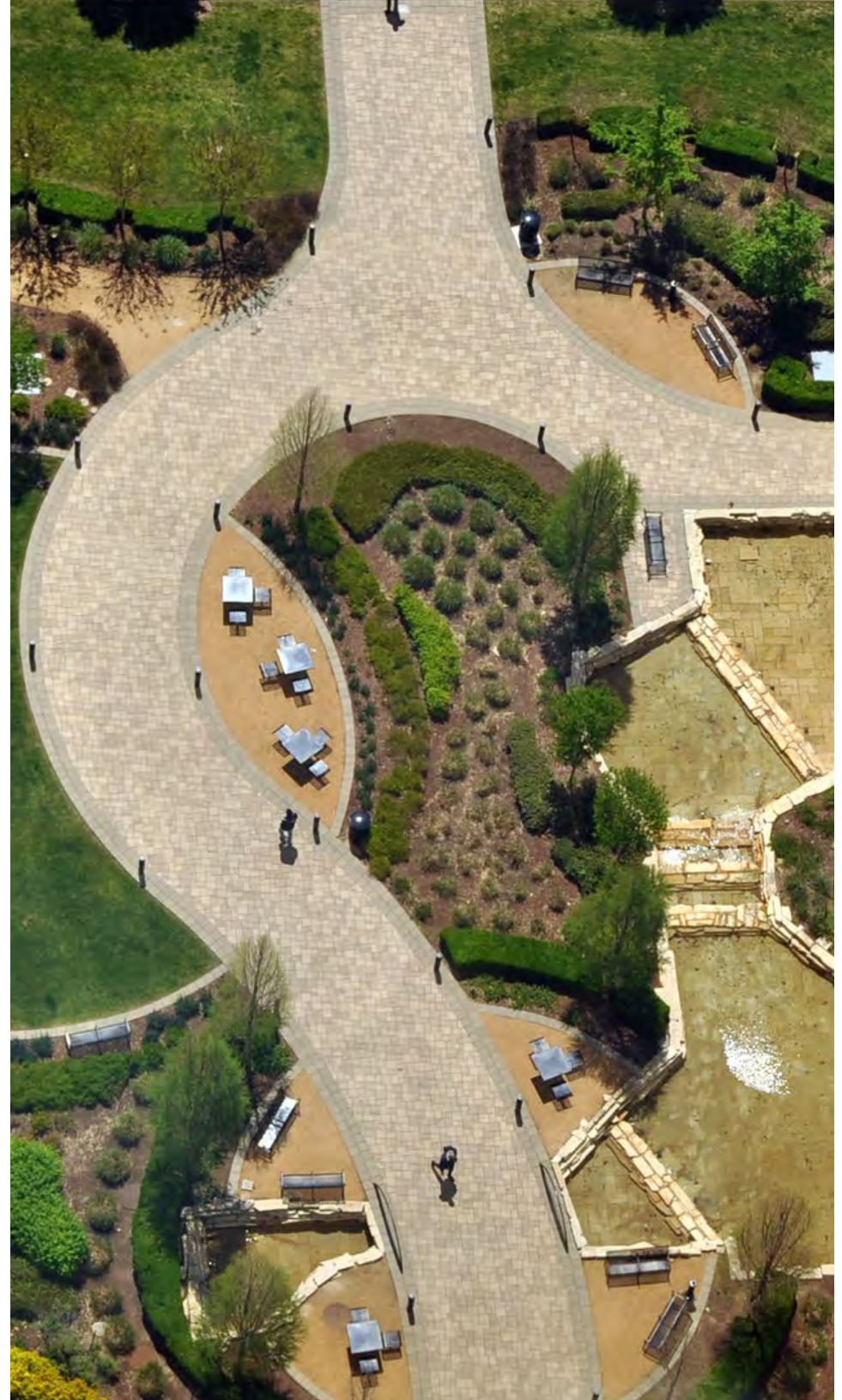
Utilize the park asset management system in conjunction with other datasets to prioritize funding allocation.

### Strategy 9.2

Communicate data and analysis to decision makers and residents to ensure common understanding of issues and solutions.

### Strategy 9.3

Regularly update all relevant data sources to ensure the most up-to-date understanding of analytical context.







## Goal 10

### Employee recruitment is enhanced by a focus on retention and improved employee experience.

Building institutional knowledge is critical for the success of any organization. By ensuring that Tulsa Parks employees have opportunities for continuing education and advancement, lessons learned through the years can be applied to improve ongoing operations and help to ensure investments into the parks system addresses known issues.

#### Strategy 10.1

Evaluate existing practices for seasonal employment, and seek more efficient and effective ways of recruitment.

#### Strategy 10.2

Seek ways to better understand and facilitate long-term retention of existing employees.

#### Strategy 10.3

Provide information that assists with the onboarding process for new employees, and information to help entry-level employees pursue upward mobility within the department.

#### Strategy 10.4

Create opportunities for youth and other volunteers to participate in programs that enhance parks and recreation opportunities in Tulsa.

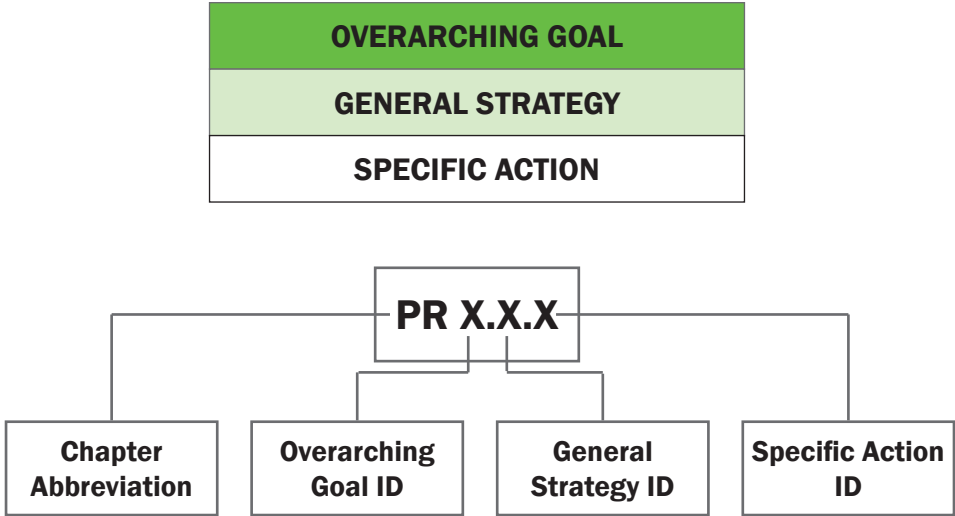


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# ACTION TABLE

This table includes the goals and strategies outlined in the previous pages with specific actions that will help to achieve the intent of the goals and strategies. Each specific action includes what type of action it is and what parties should be involved in order to implement the action. All of these goals, strategies, and actions are derived from engagement with the Tulsa community and subject matter experts, past planning efforts conducted by the City of Tulsa and partner agencies, best practices from cities across the United States, and research and data analysis conducted by Tulsa Planning Office staff. Any action taken to implement a specific strategy or action included in this table or a policy recommended elsewhere in this chapter will be in accord with Oklahoma law.



Action ID	Action Required	Action Type	Involved Parties
PR 1	Tulsa’s parks and trails systems are enhanced and maintained through coordinated efforts and funding from public, private, non-profit, and philanthropic entities.		
PR 1.1	Maintain ongoing coordination between Tulsa Parks, River Parks Authority, Tulsa County Parks Department, Gathering Place, and other park management entities.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 1.1.1	Identify gaps in the system and evaluate which entities can best provide needed services or facilities.	Planning	Tulsa Parks River Parks Authority Tulsa County Parks Private Parks
PR 1.1.2	Collaborate for maintenance assistance where needed.	Partnership	Tulsa Parks River Parks Authority Tulsa County Parks Private Parks



Action ID	Action Required	Action Type	Involved Parties
PR 1.1.3	Meet with all park entities to discuss upcoming projects and possible collaborations on a regular and recurring basis.	Partnership	Tulsa Parks River Parks Authority Tulsa County Parks Private Parks
PR 1.1.4	Hold an annual conference or public meeting to gather all of the Parks entities to convey upcoming capital improvements, initiatives, and programming opportunities to residents.	Engagement	Tulsa Parks River Parks Authority Tulsa County Parks Private Parks
PR 1.2	Develop a long-term and sustainable funding strategy for deferred maintenance issues, new projects, and programming needs.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 1.2.1	Ensure River Parks Authority's involvement in capital planning for sales tax and general obligation bond initiatives.	Capital	River Parks Authority
PR 1.2.2	Promote the Golf Course charitable fund through the Tulsa Community Foundation.	Program	Tulsa Parks
PR 1.2.3	Establish prioritization criteria for capital improvements in parks.	Planning	Tulsa Parks
PR 1.3	Explore and encourage public-private partnerships for expanded and innovative park and recreational facilities.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 1.4	Supplement park and trail maintenance programs through collaborative coordination with neighborhood and community organizations.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 1.4.1	Work with neighborhoods to establish "Adopt-a-Spot" agreements to assist in the maintenance of Parks Department facilities and open spaces.	Program	Tulsa Parks Community Development
PR 1.4.2	Collaborate with the Community Development division to plan seasonal neighborhood work days associated with neighborhood parks that include parks staff support and smaller improvement projects.	Program	Tulsa Parks Community Development



Action ID	Action Required	Action Type	Involved Parties
PR 1.4.3	Explore implementation of a “workreation” program for children to participate in the maintenance of park facilities by completing simple tasks with incentives including free admission to programming and other activities.	Program	Tulsa Parks
PR 1.4.4	Develop a Parks volunteer program, database, and tracking process.	Program	Tulsa Parks
PR 1.5	Coordinate improvements to the trails network at the regional level in collaboration with all relevant agencies.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 1.5.1	Work with tribal governments on a continuing basis as partners for park planning.	Policy	Tulsa Parks
PR 1.5.2	Develop a 918 Trails report and dashboard that shows trail usage, maintenance, construction, and conditions. Share and ask relevant agencies to contribute in ongoing tracking and management.	Technology	Tulsa Parks River Parks Authority INCOG Transportation
PR 1.5.3	Plan an annual 918 Trails summit with relevant agencies and private partners to review trail usage reports, discuss ongoing project progress, and plan coordinated maintenance and improvement efforts.	Program	Tulsa Parks River Parks Authority INCOG Transportation
PR 1.5.4	Develop a public website/portal for members of the community to identify trails, the trail types, and submit requests for maintenance and improvements that are automatically routed to the right agency and added to the ALL trails report/dashboard for review.	Technology	Tulsa Parks River Parks Authority INCOG Transportation
PR 1.6	Revise and develop donation processes to allow residents and local organizations to easily donate/contribute (monetarily, in-kind, etc.) to enhance parks and recreation facilities and trails across the city.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 1.6.1	Continue to have commemorative donation opportunities, along with approved options and prices that can be promoted to the public (benches, art, <a href="#">little libraries</a> , playgrounds, landscaping, commemorative trees, etc.)	Program	Tulsa Parks
PR 1.6.2	Redevelop and launch public communication channels (website, webpages, social media, etc.) that allow the department to submit solicitations for donations as well as promote and facilitate in-kind donations.	Program	Tulsa Parks



Action ID	Action Required	Action Type	Involved Parties
PR 1.6.3	Revise City/County ordinances and internal policies to remove unnecessary barriers for recreation staff to both solicit and accept sponsorships and in-kind donations from individuals and private entities.	Policy	City of Tulsa
PR 2	<b>Park and recreational assets are tailored to the specific needs of the surrounding neighborhoods and communities.</b>		
PR 2.1	Develop a comprehensive list of all park assets and tailor strategies based on specific community needs.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 2.1.1	Develop on-site opportunities for park users to provide instant feedback on the parks facilities, particularly assets that are in poor condition but heavily used.	Engagement	Tulsa Parks River Parks Authority
PR 2.1.2	Utilize multi-lingual follow-up surveys to collect continuous feedback for programming, sports leagues, and facilities.	Engagement	Tulsa Parks River Parks Authority
PR 2.2	Engage with surrounding neighborhoods to identify specific needs for park improvements.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 2.2.1	Utilize digital and/or hard-copy surveys to assess the specific priorities for the neighborhood.	Engagement	Tulsa Parks
PR 2.2.2	Utilize tools, such as door-knockers and mailers, to increase awareness of existing assets, current accessibility and usage, and assess sentiments.	Engagement	Tulsa Parks
PR 2.3	Develop a comprehensive database of neighborhood associations, schools, faith-based institutions, and other community organizations to assist with engagement efforts.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 2.3.1	Develop a database of surrounding partners for significant park facilities to enhance engagement reach.	Engagement	Tulsa Parks
PR 2.3.2	Utilize database software to facilitate communications with residents.	Engagement	Tulsa Parks

Action ID	Action Required	Action Type	Involved Parties
PR 2.4	Pursue commemorative donations that reflect the contributions of Tulsans and neighbors of specific parks.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 2.4.1	Work with neighbors to evaluate if existing monuments are reflective of current cultural and geographic values.	Engagement	Tulsa Parks
PR 2.4.2	Pursue historic designations for sites of significance in parks.	Policy	Tulsa Parks
PR 2.5	Develop and use stormwater retention areas for parks and recreation purposes beyond the area currently served by the Tulsa Parks system.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 2.5.1	Identify stormwater retention areas managed by the Public Works department that could be candidates for limited development (walking paths, landscaping, seating, etc.)	Planning	Tulsa Parks Public Works
PR 2.5.2	Promote activity and add signage to walking paths where possible.	Policy	Tulsa Parks
PR 2.5.3	Coordinate with the Public Works department to route and address maintenance requests as well as find funding to support ongoing area maintenance.	Policy	Tulsa Parks Public Works
PR 2.6	In areas of the city with lower rates of internet access, implement public Wi-Fi in community centers and parks.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
<b>PR 3</b>	<b>All Tulsans have easy access to places for recreation, gathering, and connecting with nature.</b>		
PR 3.1	Coordinate with school districts to promote recreational opportunities at schools where there is low access to parks.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 3.1.1	Identify parks and playgrounds at schools that are publicly accessible, and work to increase accessibility through partnerships and coordination.	Partnership	Tulsa Parks Area School Districts
PR 3.1.2	Increase monitoring of joint-use facilities through collaboration with school security or Tulsa Police Department services.	Partnership	Tulsa Parks Area School Districts



Action ID	Action Required	Action Type	Involved Parties
PR 3.1.3	Identify schools and parks that are adjacent to each other, and develop partnership approaches for activation and maintenance.	Partnership	Tulsa Parks Area School Districts
PR 3.2	Seek ways to increase park access in east Tulsa where the largest gaps in service exist.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 3.2.1	Work with neighborhoods and the East Tulsa Main Street program to enhance McCullough Park to serve as a destination park for east Tulsa.	Planning	Tulsa Parks Community Development
PR 3.2.2	Enhance connections from neighborhoods in the area to the regional trails system.	Planning	Tulsa Parks Tulsa Planning Office INCOG Transportation
PR 3.3	Encourage private parks in new development for areas of the city beyond the current area served by the Tulsa Parks system.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 3.3.1	Evaluate the feasibility of an update to the City's Subdivision Regulations to require shared open space in new subdivisions or a fee-in-lieu alternative.	Code Changes	Tulsa Planning Office Tulsa Parks
PR 3.4	Enhance existing regional destination parks throughout the city.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 3.4.1	Evaluate destination parks to determine needs for capital improvements or additional programming.	Planning	Tulsa Parks
PR 3.4.2	Engage with a broad cross-section of park users and surrounding neighborhoods to gain a wider insight into regional needs.	Engagement	Tulsa Parks
PR 3.4.3	Collaborate with Tulsa Planning Office to utilize travel data to determine where park users are coming from to inform outreach efforts.	Planning	Tulsa Parks Tulsa Planning Office
PR 3.5	Maintain and expand recreational connections between neighborhoods and the Arkansas River.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 3.5.1	Implement trail connections into neighborhoods along creeks and streams as identified in the adopted regional trail master plan and the Arkansas River Corridor Master Plan.	Planning	Tulsa Parks Tulsa Planning Office INCOG Transportation

Action ID	Action Required	Action Type	Involved Parties
PR 3.6	Where redevelopment is occurring, evaluate the need for improvements to existing under-utilized parks facilities to serve the residents of the area.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 3.6.1	Identify areas of the city where subdivision growth is occurring to determine the need for park improvements.	Planning	Tulsa Parks Tulsa Planning Office
PR 3.7	Prioritize pedestrian improvements, such as sidewalks and crosswalks, around park facilities.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 3.7.1	Evaluate traffic speeds and speed limits on streets surrounding parks, and reduce speed limits where collision risks exist.	Planning	Public Works Tulsa Parks
<b>PR 4</b>	<b>Recreational programming is available for all Tulsans regardless of age, income, physical ability, gender, race, or language ability.</b>		
PR 4.1	Expand programming options to appeal to all age groups.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 4.1.1	Survey interests and preferences by age category i.e. youth, 18-25, 25-35, through the older adult age groups.	Engagement	Tulsa Parks
PR 4.1.2	Develop programming based on age group considering interests, logistics, resources, or level of ability.	Program	Tulsa Parks
PR 4.1.3	Explore opportunities to work with local school districts, and partners, like the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife, for opportunities involving various outdoor education programs where park programs or physical resources may be applicable or complimentary in purpose.	Partnership	Tulsa Parks
PR 4.2	Provide multi-lingual recreational programming.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 4.2.1	Accommodate non-English speaking Tulsans by hiring programming staff who are fluent in the languages spoken across Tulsa.	Personnel	Tulsa Parks
PR 4.2.2	Utilize most recent demographic data per ZIP code to inform recreational programming and resource allocation.	Planning	Tulsa Parks



Action ID	Action Required	Action Type	Involved Parties
PR 4.3	Develop accessible park amenities for Tulsans that have challenges with mainstream recreational activities.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 4.3.1	Coordinate with non-profit organizations that provide services to demographics including aging, visually impaired, and developmentally or physically challenged to identify the greatest needs for programming.	Partnership	Tulsa Parks
PR 4.3.2	Coordinate resources with rehabilitation or residential treatment facilities and hospitals to partner programming opportunities.	Partnership	Tulsa Parks
PR 4.4	Work with community athletics organizations to recruit events and competitions.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 4.4.1	Facilitate local disc golf tournaments, and partner with local organizations to attract larger regional and national events.	Partnership	Tulsa Parks River Parks Authority Tulsa County Parks Community Partners
PR 4.4.2	Work with local cycling groups to increase the number of road cycling, mountain biking, and BMX events, leveraging existing facilities as well as new facilities as they are completed.	Partnership	Tulsa Parks Community Partners
PR 4.4.3	Work with the Tulsa Sports Commission and local golf clubs, rugby clubs, soccer clubs, and baseball and softball leagues to facilitate the hosting of local, regional, and national events.	Partnership	Tulsa Parks Tulsa County Parks
PR 4.4.4	Work with the Tulsa Sports Commission to grow partnerships with local and state tourism organizations.	Partnership	Tulsa Parks River Parks Authority
PR 4.4.5	Expand opportunities for fishing and other water sports, and clearly communicate requirements for licensing and other relevant regulations.	Policy	Tulsa Parks River Parks Authority

Action ID	Action Required	Action Type	Involved Parties
<b>PR 5</b>	<b>Tulsa's parks and recreation systems promote healthy lifestyles.</b>		
PR 5.1	Establish partnerships to address geographically specific health concerns throughout Tulsa.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 5.1.1	Identify geographically specific health concerns and address them through targeted park and programming improvements.	Planning	Tulsa Parks Tulsa Health Dept.
PR 5.1.2	Partner with the Tulsa Health Department to strategically promote parks and recreation facilities for varied active and healthy lifestyle initiatives.	Partnership	Tulsa Parks Tulsa Health Dept.
PR 5.1.3	Host and permit events and programs to promote healthy lifestyles, healthy ecosystems, and environmental stewardship.	Program	Tulsa Parks
PR 5.2	Coordinate and enhance the network and connectivity of parks, trails, and natural areas for nature-based recreation.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks River Parks Authority Tulsa County Parks Private Parks INCOG Transportation
PR 5.3	Encourage a mix of active and passive recreation amenities in parks to facilitate varying levels of physical activity.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 5.3.1	Work with the Tulsa Planning Office to evaluate updates to the Subdivision regulations to establish enhanced open space requirements with ratios of active and passive open space.	Planning	Tulsa Parks Tulsa Planning Office
PR 5.4	Work with neighborhoods to repurpose vacant lots to provide access to outdoor recreation or fresh foods.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 5.4.1	Support efforts to establish new community gardens, urban farms, and <u>food forests</u> .	Program	Tulsa Parks Tulsa Health Dept.
PR 5.4.2	Pursue a partnership with Tulsa Public Schools and other community groups to develop a summer lunch program to be held at community centers.	Partnership	Tulsa Parks



Action ID	Action Required	Action Type	Involved Parties
PR 5.5	Promote healthy outdoor park environments, and pursue mitigation of potential health hazards.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 5.5.1	Plant trees and other landscape buffer features where parks are located adjacent to major streets and highways to reduce noise and filter air pollution.	Capital	Tulsa Parks
PR 5.5.2	Increase the number of trash cans in parks that have a pattern of littering.	Capital	Tulsa Parks
PR 5.5.3	Continue to improve the management of stormwater run-off and water quality in water bodies in parks.	Policy	Tulsa Parks River Parks Authority Public Works
<b>PR 6</b>	<b>Marketing and communications efforts effectively promote the parks and recreation systems in Tulsa.</b>		
PR 6.1	Plan and promote public events at parks to encourage increased and innovative use.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 6.1.1	Explore opportunities for co-use and activation of park space by reaching out to local organizations that facilitate ongoing meetings or events.	Planning	Tulsa Parks
PR 6.1.2	Ensure marketing is conducted appropriately per program according to the demographics of the intended audience.	Engagement	Tulsa Parks
PR 6.1.3	Attend and provide information at pre-existing events in the city to promote programming, services, and assets.	Engagement	Tulsa Parks
PR 6.2	Facilitate robust and inclusive community engagement to identify needs and preferences of residents and neighborhoods pertaining to new parks and park improvements.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 6.3	Increase the availability of marketing, outreach, and informational materials in non-English languages regarding parks and recreation opportunities, particularly in geographic areas with larger concentrations of residents with limited English proficiency.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks Communications

Action ID	Action Required	Action Type	Involved Parties
PR 6.4	Coordinate with local, state, and national tourism and recreation marketing organizations to communicate the strengths and attraction of Tulsa's parks.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks River Parks Authority Tulsa County Parks Private Parks
PR 6.5	Incorporate up-to-date technologies and platforms for reaching diverse populations including social media, etc.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks Communications
PR 6.5.1	Continually update all associated websites to include current informations, schedules, and contact information for staff across the city.	Technology	Tulsa Parks Communications
PR 6.6	Develop a distinct brand for Tulsa Parks.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
<b>PR 7</b>	<b>Tulsa's parks are a model for best practices in sustainability.</b>		
PR 7.1	Invest in the ecological restoration of greenspaces in parks, along trails, and in undeveloped open spaces owned by the City.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 7.1.1	Establish native planting areas to reduce lawn maintenance in parks, and explore maintenance and sponsorship partnership opportunities.	Partnership	Tulsa Parks
PR 7.1.2	Reduce use of herbicides and pesticides, and require non-phosphorous fertilizer.	Policy	Tulsa Parks
PR 7.1.3	Encourage passive uses of designated conservation areas.	Policy	Tulsa Parks
PR 7.2	Incorporate sustainable design elements into park facility improvements.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 7.2.1	Add production greenhouses to enhance beautification efforts, particularly in parks with demonstration or ornamental gardens.	Capital	Tulsa Parks
PR 7.2.2	Utilize landscaping and urban forestry management approaches to increase shade and reduce urban heat island (UHI) effects.	Policy	Tulsa Parks



Action ID	Action Required	Action Type	Involved Parties
PR 7.3	Provide educational opportunities for park users and program participants that focus on sustainable lifestyles and healthy ecosystems, using parks as a teaching tool.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 7.4	Promote recycling facilities in parks and along trails where appropriate.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 7.4.1	Ensure that at golf courses, disc golf courses, and other outdoor facilities have adequate waste and recycling receptacles.	Capital	Tulsa Parks River Parks Authority
PR 7.4.2	Provide waste containers in areas with high numbers of pet dogs with noticeable signage to encourage depositing waste in containers.	Policy	Tulsa Parks
<b>PR 8</b>	<b>Tulsa's parks and trails systems are designed and operated so that all users feel safe and secure.</b>		
PR 8.1	Incorporate design elements into parks and trails facilities that increase safety.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 8.1.1	Place directional light fixtures to promote feelings of safety while minimizing impact on nocturnal wildlife.	Policy	Tulsa Parks
PR 8.1.2	Ensure a high level of visibility within parks to reduce the risks associated with hidden spaces.	Policy	Tulsa Parks
PR 8.1.3	Work with community partners to install emergency call boxes in parks and along trails.	Capital	Tulsa Parks River Parks Authority
PR 8.2	Ensure that more facilities in parks are accessible to all users.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 8.2.1	Ensure that more facilities are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.	Policy	Tulsa Parks
PR 8.2.2	Continue to provide fee waivers for programming and athletic activities for low-income users.	Program	Tulsa Parks
PR 8.2.3	Increase wayfinding in parks and along trails to ensure users are aware of all amenities and how to use the trail network for elongated routes and to move to and from different areas of the city.	Capital	Tulsa Parks

Action ID	Action Required	Action Type	Involved Parties
PR 8.2.4	Provide shelters along trail facilities to allow users to get out of the heat and have an opportunity to rest.	Capital	Tulsa Parks River Parks Authority
PR 8.3	Work with communities and law enforcement agencies to develop approaches to maintaining public safety in parks in ways that don't cause discomfort to park system users.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 8.3.1	Consider a " <u>Park Ranger</u> " program in coordination with Tulsa Police Department.	Program	Tulsa Parks Tulsa Police Dept.
PR 8.3.2	Explore the possibility for youth intervention programming at community centers.	Program	Tulsa Parks Tulsa Police Dept.
PR 8.3.3	Consistently inform park users about and enforce policies and ordinances related to proper pet and animal activity on park property.	Policy	Tulsa Parks Animal Welfare
PR 8.4	Employ maintenance techniques that reduce the risk associated with inclement weather events that may hinder normal use of parks, trails, and other facilities.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 8.5	Find opportunities and spaces where fenced, off-leash dog park amenities can be added to existing and new parks.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 8.5.1	Evaluate neighborhood parks and meet with local neighborhood association and/or groups to assess interest in dog park amenities and work through logistics of maintenance and supervision.	Planning	Tulsa Parks
<b>PR 9</b>	<b>Decisions made for improvements, changes, or additions are backed up by data analysis to ensure decisions are equitable, cost-effective, and transparent.</b>		
PR 9.1	Utilize the park asset management system in conjunction with other datasets to prioritize funding allocation.	Strategy	Multiple
PR 9.1.1	Coordinate prioritization activities with the Tulsa Planning Office's <u>Strategic Planning</u> program.	Planning	Tulsa Parks Tulsa Planning Office



Action ID	Action Required	Action Type	Involved Parties
PR 9.1.2	Coordinate with private parks or other organizations that have used data analysis to prioritize their focuses, for example the <u>Child Equity Index</u> produced by <u>Impact Tulsa</u> .	Planning	Tulsa Parks Community Partners
PR 9.1.3	Identify assets that are high quality but have low usage rates and identify strategies to increase that usage either through promotion, programming, or accessibility improvements.	Planning	Tulsa Parks
PR 9.2	Communicate data and analysis to decision makers and residents to ensure common understanding of issues and solutions.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 9.2.1	Align messaging regarding asset management and improvements with community goals.	Policy	Tulsa Parks
PR 9.2.2	Investigate what reprogramming is preferred by residents in proximity to a specific park or set of assets.	Planning	Tulsa Parks
PR 9.3	Regularly update all relevant data sources to ensure the most up-to-date understanding of analytical context.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 9.3.1	Maintain asset management databases and track maintenance requests to ensure fulfillment.	Policy	Tulsa Parks
PR 9.3.2	Evaluate progress on maintenance issues on annual basis to calibrate maintenance efforts for upcoming budget cycles.	Policy	Tulsa Parks
<b>PR 10</b>	<b>Employee recruitment is enhanced by a focus on retention and improved employee experience.</b>		
PR 10.1	Evaluate existing practices for seasonal employment, and seek more efficient and effective ways of recruitment.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 10.1.1	Regularly complete a salary and benefits analysis of positions comparing to other local organizations (YMCA, YWCA, etc.), and surrounding cities.	Personnel	Tulsa Parks

Action ID	Action Required	Action Type	Involved Parties
PR 10.1.2	Develop a recruitment strategy that includes marketing materials, supplies for job fairs, and a schedule of recruitment events for department staff to recruit seasonal employees (pool staff, camp counselors, natural resources, etc.)	Personnel	Tulsa Parks
PR 10.2	Seek ways to better understand and facilitate long-term retention of existing employees.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 10.2.1	Explore park and recreation specific benefits for parks employees, such as free or discounted access to recreation center programs for staff members.	Personnel	Tulsa Parks
PR 10.3	Provide information that assists with the onboarding process for new employees, and information to help entry-level employees pursue upward mobility within the department.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 10.3.1	Provide resources and events that help new employees learn about the different teams within Tulsa Parks and other relevant departments, what they do, and who they can contact.	Personnel	Tulsa Parks
PR 10.3.2	Provide resources and a list of trainings and certificates employees can pursue to advance their career within the department	Personnel	Tulsa Parks
PR 10.4	Create opportunities for youth and other volunteers to participate in programs that enhance parks and recreation opportunities in Tulsa.	Strategy	Tulsa Parks
PR 10.4.1	Consider the development of a volunteer/service-hour/intern program or school partnerships that provide youth with the opportunity to learn more about working in the Park and Recreation field and how it relates to some of the learning they may be doing as youth in or out of school.	Personnel	Tulsa Parks
PR 10.4.2	Increase the amount of community engagement events where staff participates, and have actionable resources to promote volunteer opportunities and recruitment.	Personnel	Tulsa Parks



## SELECTED CITY COMPARISON

Tulsa Planning Office staff selected this set of 6 cities from the review of more than 30 comprehensive plans from across the United States. Some of these cities were selected due to being located within a similar climate region, while some were selected due to their policy approaches outlined in their comprehensive plans. Metrics were selected from the online resource, ParkScore, to compare and contrast operational approaches to park and recreation management, as well as metrics to evaluate recreational opportunities available for older adults and children.

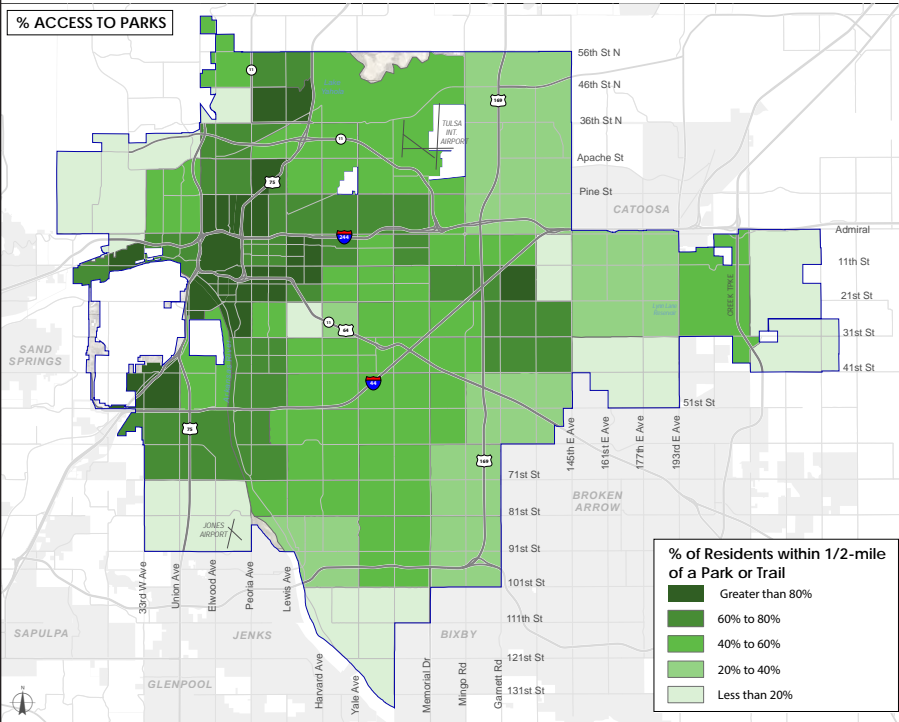


Most Favorable Least Favorable

Metric	Units	Tulsa, OK	Oklahoma City, OK	Oakland, CA	Albuquerque, NM	Raleigh, NC	Nashville, TN	Tampa, FL
Access to Parks	%	65%	43%	89%	91%	48%	46%	64%
Park Spending per Capita (all entities)	\$	\$85	\$74	\$111	\$75	\$176	\$52	\$44
Park Spending per Capita (City only)	\$	\$34	\$63	\$83	\$70	\$164	\$47	\$42
Recreation and Senior Centers per Capita	U/pop*20,000	0.4	0.7	1.1	1.1	1.6	0.8	1.7
Playgrounds per Capita	U/pop*10,000	3.8	2	3	3.2	2.5	2.4	2.3

## FEATURED METRIC

### Access to Parks



Tulsa ranks near the top for access to parks when compared to the selected cities. Around 60% of Tulsans live within a 10-minute walk of a park, with predominantly minority neighborhoods having 26% more park space per person than the city median. Tulsa compares well to other cities in this metric. Most areas of the city are well covered by the existing parks systems; however, overall access numbers are brought down by areas at the city limits, where residents typically have larger homes and yards, and have access to an automobile to travel to the nearest regional park. For areas of the city where residents are less likely to have access to an automobile or a large private yard efforts should be taken to ensure that sidewalks, public transit, and other alternative transportation options exist and are in a safe and accessible state in order to overcome potential access barriers.

### Park Spending per Capita

Tulsa has more varied investment in parks facilities than any of the other selected cities, with City funding accounting for less than half of the funding for parks within the city limits. Among the selected cities, Tulsa has the lowest investment per capita from the City government, but by far the largest amount from nonprofit entities. This is reflective of the investments made in Gathering Place, John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park, Guthrie Green, and others.

### Recreation and Senior Centers per Capita

Tulsa is among the selected cities with low amounts of recreation and senior centers per capita. It is estimated that Tulsa has 0.39 centers per 20,000 people. While this metric that derives from the Trust for Public Land's Park Score, there are no fully dedicated senior centers in the city limits, so this per capita figure is more realistic for the total number of recreational centers in Tulsa. Parks and recreational spaces are important for all stages of life, and ensuring that there are accessible to our senior population is crucial to provide increased quality of life.

### Playgrounds per Capita

Tulsa has one of the highest quantities of playgrounds per capita compared to the selected cities. It is estimated that Tulsa has 2.38 playgrounds per 10,000 residents. Playgrounds are great amenities for Tulsa families and should be maintained for safety and enjoyment.

## EQUITY & RESILIENCE CONSIDERATIONS

### ACCESS TO PARKS AND TRAILS

Public park and trail facilities are community assets that facilitate active lifestyles, interaction with nature, and places for events and gathering. Without access to these types of places, communities may lack social cohesion and may have more negative health outcomes. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has found that the importance of park access is particularly high among adolescents, where those who have access to multiple recreation facilities are substantially lower risk for obesity and associated health outcomes than adolescents that do not have recreation options.

In Tulsa, the parks system is significant with dozens of parks and many miles of multi-use trails. However, the distribution of these facilities is not uniform across the city, and as development trends have extended the footprint of the city, new park facilities have not been able to be developed or maintained to accommodate the growth. In particular, east Tulsa and south Tulsa have fewer parks per capita than other regions of the city. South Tulsa is wealthier on average than other parts of the city, and most homes have adequate yards to facilitate physical activity. Additionally, car ownership is nearly universal in south Tulsa, so larger regional parks are generally accessible. East Tulsa, however, has lower access to automobiles, and there is a lack of nearby regional parks. This area has significant populations of racial and ethnic minorities, as well as low- to moderate-income households.

### Recommendations

- PN.ER.1* Identify parks and playgrounds at schools that are publicly accessible, and work to increase accessibility through partnerships and coordination.
- PN.ER.2* Evaluate the feasibility of an update to the City's Subdivision Regulations to require shared open space in new subdivisions or a fee-in-lieu alternative.
- PN.ER.3* Implement trail connections into neighborhoods along creeks and streams as identified in the adopted regional trail master plan and the Arkansas River Corridor Master Plan.

### RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING OPPORTUNITIES

Tulsa is generally an excellent city for recreation opportunities. Many cities of similar size only dream of having parks as impressive as Gathering Place, Turkey Mountain Urban Wilderness, or Mohawk Park. Programming, in the form of community center classes, camps, or sports leagues, has grown with the enhancement of the parks environment in the city, but there are inconsistencies with regard to opportunities for differing demographic groups. In particular, there is a significant need for an increase in public recreational programming for older adults. Presently, programming for older adults is primarily offered through private, non-profit, or religious entities, presenting a potential barrier for entry to low-income or non-religious older adults.

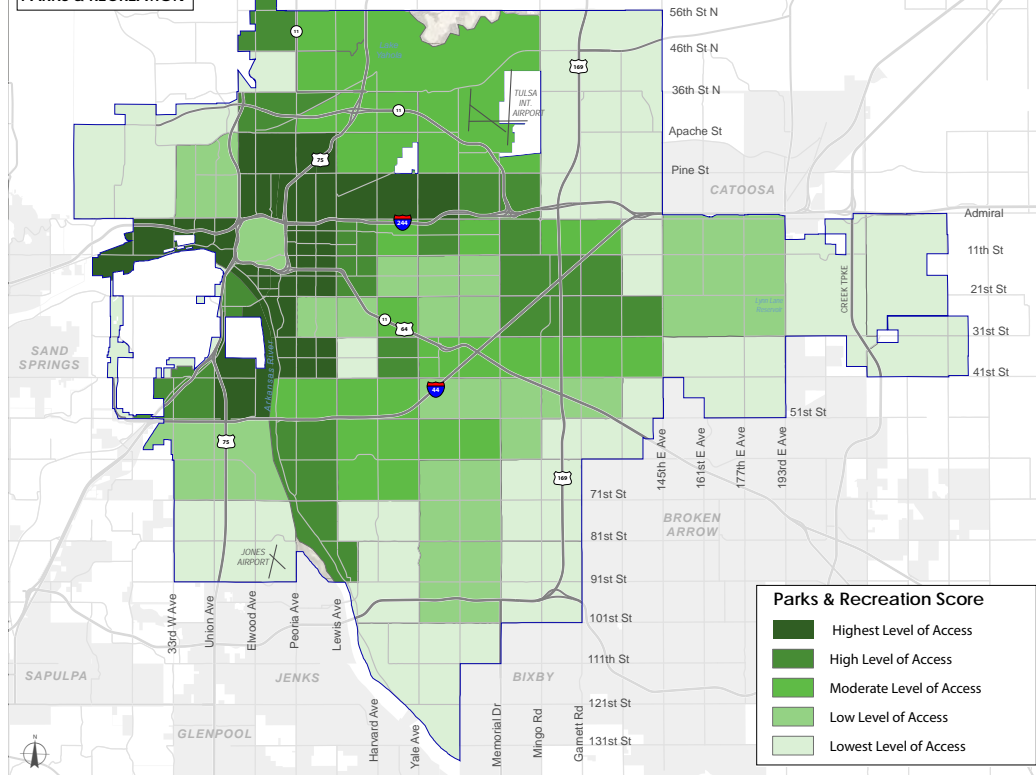
Broken Arrow, Tulsa's neighbor to the southeast, has senior wellness centers, and many older adults from Tulsa make the drive to partake in the services and programming offered at these facilities. Tulsa County Parks and Recreation have added senior wellness programming in their community centers, including Tai-Chi and Diabetes education, but operations were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Another example of a community with substantial senior wellness infrastructure is Oklahoma City, where several senior wellness centers were funded through the MAPS 3 penny sales tax, and more have been funded through MAPS 4 due to the popularity of the new facilities.

### Recommendations

- PN.ER.4* Pursue capital and operation funding to establish senior wellness centers across the city.
- PN.ER.5* Increase recreational programming opportunities for all ages in parks and community centers.
- PN.ER.6* transportation services for older adults to facilitate safe travel to and from wellness centers.



## EQUITY & RESILIENCE PARKS & RECREATION



This map is generated using data from the Tulsa Planning Office's [Neighborhood Conditions Index \(NCI\)](#).

## GEOGRAPHIC DISPARITIES

The above map identifies where residents have access to parks, trails, playgrounds, and recreation or senior centers. While most areas of the city have good access to parks, trail access is largely limited to the areas close to the river and north and south of downtown. The area along Highway 169 near Broken Arrow is home to many apartment tenants, but the area has few parks, trails, senior centers, or other recreation facilities. Neighborhoods in south Tulsa also lack access to parks and recreation facilities, but large back yards are common.

## INDICATORS USED IN MAP

- % of Residents within 1/2-mile of a Park
- % of Residents within 1/2-mile of a Multi-Use Trail
- % of Residents within 1 mile of a Recreation or Senior Center
- % of Residents within 1/2-mile of a Playground

## RELEVANT EQUALITY INDICATORS \*

No indicators in the Equality Indicators reports are related to recreational facility or programming access. It is recommended that access to parks and trails, as well as the availability of programming opportunities be added in future iterations of the report to determine where specific investments are needed.

## RELEVANT RESILIENT TULSA ACTIONS\*\*

**ACTION 13:** Develop a Healthy Food Environment Coalition

## VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

- Low-Income households
- Older adults
- Youth
- Persons with physical and/or cognitive disabilities
- Low-density areas with lack of pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit infrastructure
- Households without access to an automobile

\*Equality Indicator reports are issued annually by the City of Tulsa.

\*\*Resilient Tulsa Strategy was adopted by the City of Tulsa in 2018.

## HEALTH & WELLNESS CONSIDERATIONS

### Access to Parks and Trails

Health Impact	Associated Health Outcome
Higher levels of physical activity associated with park usage	Reduction in obesity, cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease
More frequent encounters with nature and community	Decrease in anxiety and depressive disorders, emotional well-being

#### Tulsa Context

Presently in Tulsa, 60% of residents live within a 10-minute walk from a park facility, which is slightly above the national average of 55%. These rates are higher for low-income and minority residents, with Black, Latin American, and American Indian residents having the higher rates than White and Asian residents. The parks in Tulsa with the most usage include the River Parks, Gathering Place, LaFortune Park, Mohawk Park, and Hunter Park. Given the significant access to park facilities in Tulsa, there are great opportunities for promoting health-improving programs and events.

#### Policy Recommendations

- PN.HW.1* Develop targeted programming in parks to increase visitation.
- PN.HW.2* Assess park quality, design, and aesthetics city-wide regularly to establish which parks may need intervention to increase park utilization.
- PN.HW.3* Prioritize sidewalks, crosswalks, and other pedestrian infrastructure construction to increase access to parks.
- PN.HW.4* Conduct outreach and engagement with various populations groups, including youth, seniors, and immigrant populations to better understand varied needs for accessing their local parks.
- PN.HW.5* Ensure all local and public parks are visible on search engine maps.

### Community Gathering Places

Health Impact	Associated Health Outcome
Higher levels of physical activity associated with park usage	Reduction in obesity, cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease
More frequent encounters with nature and community	Decrease in anxiety and depressive disorders, emotional well-being

#### Tulsa Context

Green spaces build community. Research shows that residents of neighborhoods with greenery in common spaces are more likely to enjoy stronger social ties than those who live surrounded by barren concrete. A study by the University of Illinois and the University of Chicago found that for urban public housing residents, levels of vegetation in common spaces predicted the formation of neighborhood social ties. Though inner-city areas of Tulsa have adequate parks facilities, these areas have significantly less tree canopy coverage than more affluent areas of the city. Additionally, access to public parks and recreational facilities has been strongly linked to reductions in crime and reduced juvenile delinquency.

#### Policy Recommendations

- PN.HW.6* Promote the parks as gathering places for neighborhoods through marketing and informational communications.
- PN.HW.7* Strategically increase tree canopy coverage in parks in areas of the city with high rates of impervious surfaces.
- PN.HW.8* Develop targeted programming in parks to increase visitation.
- PN.HW.9* Conduct outreach and engagement with youth, older adults, and immigrant populations to better understand their needs for accessing and using their local parks.

## FUNDING PRIORITIES

According to the surveys conducted during the development of the new Parks Master Plan survey respondents identified several priorities. In particular, new and improved trails and pathways, new neighborhood parks, additional amenities at existing parks, and new playgrounds topped the list of identified priorities. When asked, “What would increase your use of parks?”, respondents indicated the following were priorities:

- Better conditions and maintenance of park facilities
- Lighting improvements in parks (particularly notable among respondents from east and south Tulsa)
- Wi-Fi connectivity at parks and community centers (particularly notable among respondents from north and west Tulsa)
- More local neighborhood programming rather than programming at regional facilities

As capital funding opportunities arise it will be important that all of these priorities are considered for funding. Discussions among the various park entities that can benefit from programs like Vision Tulsa and Improve Our Tulsa will help to ensure a more equitable and effective investment.

## REGIONALISM CONSIDERATIONS

Tulsa has several entities that manage parks, trails, and green spaces. These include the City of Tulsa Park and Recreation Department, the River Parks Authority, Tulsa County Parks Department, and a host of non-profit organizations that manage parks like the Gathering Place, John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park, and Guthrie Green. On top of this are communal green spaces built as part of new subdivisions where park facilities are limited. Finally, surrounding communities also have parks facilities, and there are several State Parks, National Wildlife Refuges, and National Forests within a two-hour drive of the Tulsa area. This suite of recreation facilities makes the Tulsa region stand out from the rest of the state and presents great opportunities for collaboration.

While there are many parks facilities across the region, programming for residents is not as evenly distributed. For example, seniors in Tulsa will often drive to Broken Arrow to participate in the senior programming as those services do not presently exist in the Tulsa city limits. Expanding programming in Tulsa for seniors, children, and everyone in-between will fill in gaps that have reduced the quality of life in the city by comparison to surrounding communities. Additionally, quality programming resources in Tulsa will serve to attract residents of surrounding communities.



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Asset Management System** – A policy to track and schedule routine maintenance or replacements to assure the long-life of the assets and reduce the risk of unexpected and unfunded repairs.

**Brand Management** - Building recognition of a product or service that is distinct to those products or services and through which data collection continues and is used to retain and draw new customers.

**Capital Improvement Package** – An approved list of funded projects that substantially add value to a facility or infrastructure, or a list of projects that will be funding pending a vote of the community.

**Communications Framework** - The methods for conveying a message or information to others.

**Deferred Maintenance** - The practice of not performing less costly routine maintenance and repairs resulting later in more costly repairs or replacements often in an untimely occurrence.

**Destination Parks** - Parks that have special features, characteristics, or amenities which attract visitors for those specific reasons.

**Equity** - Just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential.

**Food Forest** - Gardening in a wooded area with plant-based food compatible with the ecosystem and enhancing a sustainable source of food without annual plantings.

**Health Outcomes** - A change in the health status of an individual, group, or population which is attributable to a planned intervention or series of interventions, regardless of whether such an intervention was intended to change health status.

**Healthful Lifestyles** - A collection of choices of resources that combine to positively influence an individual's overall mental and physical health as a way of life.

**Institutional Knowledge** - Characteristics of the workplace gained over time through practices such as first-hand knowledge, experience, data gathering.

**Limited English Proficiency (LEP)** - Term used in the United States that refers to a person who is not fluent in the English language, often because it is not their native language.

**Little Libraries** - Dedicated space outside of the library facilities that serve a local neighborhood with reading materials.

**Nature-Based Recreation** - Enjoying outdoor activities in a natural environment while emphasizing the preservation of the natural elements.

**Park Ranger** - An individual assigned to patrol the area and assure that rules, regulations and laws are being followed in order to preserve the park's assets and enhance the safety of park visitors.

**Passive Recreation Amenities** - Activities in outdoor natural environments which can be enjoyed without installing equipment into the landscape such as hiking, fishing, or non-motorized boating.

**Platforms** - Methods of passing information along to others, for example: brochures, radio, social media etc.

**Programmatic Opportunities** - Activities, such as classes, intramural sports leagues, day care, or public events.

**Regional Destinations** - A geographic area with public space of adequate size and amenities to draw residents from multiple neighborhoods and adjacent communities to the site.

**Seasonal Employment** - Employment that is only active during certain periods of the year rather than the entire year, such as lifeguards.

**Stormwater Retention Area** - Temporary storage for rainwater, particularly useful during heavy rains or prolonged periods of rain to reduce flooding.

**Strategic Planning** - Process used by organizations to identify their goals, the strategies necessary to accomplish those goals, and the internal performance management system used to monitor and evaluate progress.

**Sustainability** - Managing resources to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**Traffic Calming** - A range of methods to slow motor vehicles as they move through commercial and residential areas.

## RELEVANT CITY DEPARTMENTS, PROGRAMS, PLANS, AND EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS

**Animal Welfare** - A division of the Department of City Experience responsible for the management of animal welfare programs, animal control, and the City's animal shelter.

**Cherry Creek Trail** - A 1.53 mile improved trail between W. 37th Pl. and W. 45th St.

**Child Equity Index** - A system of indicators developed by Impact Tulsa that assist in the measurement of impacts on healthy childhood development.

**Community Development Division** - A division of the Department of City Experience that administers community and economic development programs and initiatives, supporting residents in creating economically viable and sustainable communities through neighborhood partnerships, housing programs, and community development initiatives.

**Gathering Place** - A 66-acre destination park along the Arkansas River with water features, recreational equipment, and outdoor programming that is free to the public and has commercial amenities.

**GO Plan (2015)** - The Tulsa Region's first comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian master plan with the vision to make Tulsa a great place for walking and biking for everyone.

**Impact Tulsa** - An organization partnering with a variety of community resources to obtain data and positively impact childhood lifestyles through high-quality education.

**INCOG Transportation** - As a function of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Tulsa area, INCOG Transportation facilitates a cooperative effort with federal, state, and local governments and other transportation agencies to assess the area's transportation requirements and to develop comprehensive, multi-modal plans and programs that address the needs and goals of the region.

**Joe Creek Trail** - Beginning at E. 61st St. west of Peoria Ave., the trail extends south connecting to the River Trails near E. 78th St.

**MAPS 3/MAPS 4** - A series of capital improvements programs in Oklahoma City that uses a limited-term 1% sales tax to pay for quality of life improvements.

**Mingo Valley Trail System** - Two segments of improved trails beginning at Mingo Rd. and I-244 to 41st St. and also from 71st St. to Memorial Dr. totaling 9.4 miles.

**Public Works Department** - A department of the City of Tulsa that is responsible for planning, directing and coordinating the construction and maintenance of streets and public facilities, managing all related engineering services, and maintaining stormwater systems.

**RecPro Database** - A professional software used by Tulsa Parks to facilitate two-way engagement with the community for parks and recreation programs.

**River Parks Authority** - An organization that aims to enhance community life through stewardship of parks and public spaces along the Arkansas River.

**River Parks West Trail** - A 7-mile improved trail west of the Arkansas River beginning at I-244 and extending south to E. 71st St.

**Streetlight Travel Data** - A service used by the City of Tulsa that analyzes anonymous cell phone location points to gather data about the use of facilities and to inform a variety of objectives.

**Subdivision and Development Regulations** - A set of regulations governing the design, improvement, creation of subdivisions and additional developments.

**Tulsa Health Department (THD)** - The primary public health agency for Tulsa County residents, including 13 municipalities and unincorporated areas.

**Tulsa Parks** - A department of the City of Tulsa that aims to create, provide, and preserve quality parks and recreation opportunities that meet community needs for the health and wellbeing and for all Tulsans.

**Tulsa Planning Office** - A division of the Department of City Experience that administers the zoning and planning process for the City of Tulsa.

**Tulsa Police Department (TPD)** - A department of the City of Tulsa that provides law enforcement and safety services to Tulsa residents.

**Turkey Mountain Master Plan** - A guide for both the preservation and addition of amenities for a 650 acre area west of the Arkansas River with 300 feet elevations, mixed wilderness habitats, and recreational opportunities.

**YMCA** - Young Men's Christian Association: founded in 1844 in response to unhealthy social conditions after the Industrial Revolution; today, a source of individual and group exercise and sport activities.

**YWCA** - The Young Women's Christian Association is a nonprofit organization with a focus on empowerment, leadership, and rights of women, young women, and girls in more than 100 countries.

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# SOURCES AND REFERENCES

## Subject Matter Experts and Relevant Plans

City of Tulsa Park and Recreation Department (Tulsa Parks)

River Parks Authority

Tulsa County Parks and Recreation Department

Gathering Place

Oklahoma Department of Tourism and Recreation

## Community Engagement Activities

All engagement activities associated with the 2022 Parks Master Plan

Resident Input Sessions

Resident Input Survey

Resident Input Emails and Phone Calls

## Selected City Metrics

<https://parkscore.com>

## Equity and Resilience Considerations & Health and Wellness Considerations

Bedimo-Rung Ariane L., PhD, Andrew J. Mowen, PhD, Deborah A. Cohen, MD. "The significance of parks to physical activity and public health: A Conceptual Model." *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*. 2005. 28(2): 159-168. [www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797\(04\)00304-6/fulltext](http://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0749-3797(04)00304-6/fulltext).

Cummins, Steven, Stafford, Mai et al. "Neighborhood environment and its associations with self-rated health: evidence from Scotland and England." *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*. 2005. [jech.bmj.com/content/59/3/207.short](http://jech.bmj.com/content/59/3/207.short).

Oklahoma's State of Health: The People, the Economy, and the Environment, 2018- 2022; Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department. Oklahoma State University. 2017. [www.geog.okstate.edu/images/DOCS/RMPGIS/SCORP/2017-12-15\\_SCORP.pdf](http://www.geog.okstate.edu/images/DOCS/RMPGIS/SCORP/2017-12-15_SCORP.pdf)

Cohen DA, Lapham S, Evenson KR, et al. "Use of neighborhood parks: does socioeconomic status matter? A four-city study." *Public Health*. (2013). 127(4):325-332. doi:10.1016/j.puhe.2013.01.003

Moore LV, Diez Roux AV, Evenson KR, McGinn AP, Brines SJ. "Availability of recreational resources in minority and low socioeconomic status areas." *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*. (2008). 34(1): 16-22. doi:10.1016/j.amepre.2007.09.021

National Recreation and Park Association. "Safe Routes to Parks: Improving Access to Parks through Walkability." (2022). [www.nrpa.org/contentassets/f768428a39aa4035ae55b2aaff372617/park-access-report.pdf](http://www.nrpa.org/contentassets/f768428a39aa4035ae55b2aaff372617/park-access-report.pdf)

Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. "Social Determinants of Health: Social Cohesion." Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2022). [www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/social-cohesion](http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/social-cohesion).

Cohen, Deborah A, MD, MPH, Thomas L. McKenzie, PhD et al. "Contribution of Public Parks to Physical Activity." *American Journal of Public Health*. (2007). 97: 509-514. doi. org/10.2105/AJPH.2005.072447.

## Photos

City of Tulsa. Guthrie Green. Facebook. 2021. <https://www.facebook.com/cityoftulsa/photos>. Page 2

Tulsa Parks. Parks Staff. 2021, Tulsa, OK. Page 3

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Jeffries, Daniel. Central Park. 2021. Tulsa, OK. Page 7

Foster, Nathan. Bird & Disc Golf. 2021. Tulsa, OK. Page 8

Tulsa Parks. Zumba Dancers. 2021. Tulsa, OK. Page 9

Tulsa Parks. Runner. 2021. Tulsa, OK. Page 10

Tulsa Parks. Lubell Park Sign. 2021. Tulsa, OK. Page 11

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