



# Parks and Green Infrastructure for Health Workshop

October 16, 2019



**WILLAMETTE PARTNERSHIP**

## WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Collaboration was central to the progress made at the [Parks and Green Infrastructure for Health Workshop](#). Nearly 50 professionals from the public, nonprofit, private, and philanthropic sectors came together for a packed day devoted to exploring how policies can be used at the local, state and federal levels to encourage the development of green infrastructure in parks for community health benefits.

## CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION

The workshop was designed to promote cross-sector collaboration through authentic partnerships, which began with a pre-conference exercise to connect attendees from diverse locations and sectors before they even arrived in D.C. During the workshop, a space was created for people to break out of silos, learn about sectors they don't work in, and ideate with new perspectives about how to push this work forward.

## STATE OF THE FIELD

The day began with a couple of presentations to ground our conversations for the day. Barton Robison (Willamette Partnership) shared about the importance of promoting health equity, while Sean Watts (SM Watts Consulting) educated the group about the intersections and gaps between the modern environmental and civil rights movements.

*Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible.*

- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

## POLICY IDEATION

The bulk of the day was focused on identifying policies that can help increase the adoption of green infrastructure in parks. Bobby Cochran (Willamette Partnership) led our groups through three separate policy sessions focused on:

- Ideating policies at the federal, state, and local levels
- Analyzing each policy with an equity lens
- Identifying the top priority policies that attendees want to see happen

Focusing on removing barriers and giving permission (authorizing), funding (prioritizing), and requirements and incentives (normalizing), our six table groups came up with nearly 200 separate policy ideas and areas. When it came time to identify the priorities, there were six that rose to the top for our workshop attendees:

### VOTES

15

Direct funding for operations and maintenance (O&M) at the local, state and federal levels, including funding for evaluation, monitoring, and adaptive management.

8

Increase diverse representation in park & recreation positions of power at local, state and federal levels.

7

Adopt the CDC's HIAP framework and use it as a model to promote public health and green infrastructure in state and federal policies.

- 7 Interagency cooperation and integration around funding and planning green infrastructure projects at the local level.

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- 6 Reparations at the state and federal levels. How can we use land access and parks to address historical discrimination against non-white people?

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- 6 Fund a Green and Red New Deal that takes into account indigenous perspectives and practices at the federal and state levels.

During the debrief at the end of the day, several participants pointed out that climate change and adaptation, housing, and anti-displacement policies weren't lifted up to the top of our priority list, which could be a blind spot in current green infrastructure policies. Our policy team will be sure to include these policy areas in future searches and iterations of this project as we narrow down the final list of policy recommendations to be included in the forthcoming Policy Action Framework.

## **STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS**

The final session of the day focused on how to share these ideas and policies with the populations whose support is integral to changing policy. After a brief educational session about strategic communications, Lisa Falconer (Red Tree Strategy) led the group through an exercise identifying the asks, values, and barriers that different audiences might face in trying to advance green infrastructure policies. The group had a great discussion around language and how we talk about these different audiences, and the input we received will help shape the Communications Toolkit.

## **BETTER WORKING TOGETHER - OUTCOMES AND TAKEAWAYS**

Collaboration was a central theme across many of the policy ideas that came up throughout the day. Whether it was a push for interagency agreements or recognition that communities need to be engaged at the earliest stages of the planning process, our participants realized that promoting green infrastructure in parks isn't a job that parks and recreation professionals can tackle on their own.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The input and ideas we received from the workshop will influence two separate products our team is working to develop for the Parks and Green Infrastructure for Health project:

- A Policy Action Framework to equip park and recreation professionals to work with elected officials, community leaders, and staff across agencies to implement policies that encourage the proliferation of green infrastructure in parks.
- A Communications Toolkit to help park and recreation professionals strategically communicate the benefits of green infrastructure to diverse audiences.

From our teams at the National Recreation & Park Association and Willamette Partnership, thank you so much to all of our participants for sharing your ideas and bringing your whole selves to the conversation.

For more information about this project, please visit the [Parks and Green Infrastructure for Health website](#).

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