

SEPTEMBER 2016 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN SUMMARIES OF CCCN PILOT SITES

AUSTIN

In an equity-focused response to a geographic analysis highlighting severe disparities in children's access to nature, the City of Austin, Texas and partners will convert schoolyards to include more green and natural features and activate connections between parks and residents in priority neighborhoods. The **Green School Parks Initiative** launched in 2017 uses one school site to pilot a model for eventual replication across additional Austin school grounds. The Green School Parks will provide children an easy-to-reach venue for nature-based education and play during and after school hours. As a complementary step, in collaboration with the University of Texas, Austin will **increase its capacity to collect data on impact**, initially by creating a comprehensive inventory of program types and locations within the [Learn All the Time](#) out-of-school time network. Additional support strategies include:

- **Policy tracking** focused on city code revisions and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan position Austin to embed policies promoting equitable access to nature into the core of city operations; and
- **Public awareness and marketing** to communicate the benefits of nature play, modeled on successful statewide anti-smoking and anti-littering campaigns, with the city's **Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights** adopted in January, 2017 providing a policy backdrop.

GRAND RAPIDS

By adding a children and nature lens to a parks master planning process that was already underway, the city of Grand Rapids, Michigan honed in on inequities in access to green space in two portions of the city predominantly home to residents of color. Using a multi-layered, youth-informed planning process, the city arrived at three interrelated strategies to increase equity in children's access to nature. **Green Schoolyard development** serves as the primary strategy, with an initial 2017 focus on Buchanan and Burton Elementary schools as pilot sites for eventual city-wide implementation. Building upon the expansion of green space and natural features on those two schools' grounds, a second strategy involves increasing ease of **neighborhood connections to the local trail system**. Simultaneously, through the existing Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) network, Grand Rapids will pursue opportunities to remedy gaps in nature-related programming in **out-of-school time** (OST) settings.

CITIES Connecting Children to NATURE

LOUISVILLE

A close examination confirmed the existence of some of the greatest disparities of children's nature access in the Louisville, Kentucky neighborhood of West Louisville. Building upon a park improvement plan for the neighborhood as a pilot for future citywide action, the city has set out to plot a course toward far more equitable access to nature via three main courses of action:

- **Developing green career pathways** through spring training and paid summer work opportunities for young adults from West Louisville;
- **Expanding availability of summer out-of-school time (OST)** programming for children from West Louisville, led by the trained young adults; and
- Undertaking **targeted marketing efforts** to reach out strategically and engage communities of color with current highest disparities of nature access.

MADISON

The City of Madison, Wisconsin seeks to increase opportunities for young children of color and their parents to spend time in nature, for multiple benefits and as a response to recent local health record analyses that revealed racial disparities in obesity emerging in early toddlerhood. To these ends, Madison will shift policies and practices at **early childhood facilities** regulated by the city to embrace more nature connections. The effort will begin in facilities in the six zip codes serving the majority of Madison's children of color, and eventually expand throughout the full range of accredited facilities. Complementary activities include **institutionalization of nature-based play and learning throughout the school district** and **prioritization of equitable access to nature within the City's planning process** for the Comprehensive Plan and the Parks and Open Space plans. Madison will also build upon significant youth involvement in the planning phase to establish a **youth leadership pipeline** that offers training and career opportunities, as well as immediate opportunities to shape nature spaces and strategies within Public Health, Planning, and Parks operations.

PROVIDENCE

The City of Providence, Rhode Island utilized a youth-informed planning process to inform a five-plank plan to expand children's access to nature, which complements existing health promotion efforts and includes:

- Cultivate **youth stewardship** and engagement with parks, through the development of Young Friends of Providence Parks groups based in local high schools.
- **Enhance natural features and play areas in parks** and undertake family engagement to fulfill a vision set out in the existing citywide parks plan;
- Convert existing hardscape play areas to **Green Schoolyards**, initially at three urban schools;
- **Train teachers** in the Providence Public Schools to maximize walkable nearby nature opportunities that can contribute to recreation or learning at no cost; and
- Reinforce and extend the reach of the above strategies through a **marketing and communications campaign** targeted to high-need neighborhoods.

CITIES Connecting Children to NATURE

SAINT PAUL

Having identified a growing gap in communications and perspectives between the parks department and communities of color through extensive 2016 focus groups led by community liaisons--as well as opportunities to build upon significant children and nature pilot innovations--the City of St. Paul, Minnesota will initially undertake three principal strategies:

- **Reviewing and revising park communication and outreach** to ensure welcoming environments that support a range of ways for families and children to connect with nature.
- **Expand implementation of [NatureSmart Libraries](#)**, at several more sites of the Saint Paul Public Library system, to offer nature-based family programs, lending backpacks and seeds, and onsite natural access facilitated by trained staff.
- In partnership with the local [YMCA](#) and the National Park Service, create a new opportunity for children of color participating in programs in St. Paul's [Sprockets](#) out-of-school time network, to attend a **low cost summer nature day camp**.

St. Paul will also pursue supporting **policy changes** related to pedestrian access, tree planting, and funding for a major environmental education center along the city's riverfront, so as to provide more equitable access to natural features.

SAN FRANCISCO

To realize the promise of greater equity embodied in the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights policy directive developed in 2014, the City and County of San Francisco, California will pursue several strategies:

- Leverage city investments in early childhood to assess and begin expanding nature access in **early education sites**;
- Build upon significant existing nature access in K-12 schools through **Green Schoolyard** improvements in priority communities, and pilot test a *Green Schoolyards Equity Assessment Toolkit*; and
- **Systematically engage youth** from identified priority communities, to inform a citywide vision of greater youth and family nature access from a neighborhood level.

In support of these strategies, San Francisco will also develop **standards** for more equitable natural feature access in city planning and other **policy** areas, and implement a culturally relevant **marketing and communications** strategy around the Bill of Rights.