

# THE CLEVELAND PARKS + GREENSPACE COALITION

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**The Cleveland Parks and Greenspace Coalition** represents residents and organizations who use, develop, maintain, and program parks and greenspaces for the purpose of providing equitable public spaces that reflect the communities where they are located.

Since summer 2020, we have convened more than one hundred constituent peers to participate in informal learning sessions on parks-related topics by local stakeholders and organizations from outside the region, and a series of workshops to develop a common vision and goals for our field. This work led to the launch of the Cleveland Parks and Greenspace Coalition to become a trusted convener dedicated to ensuring that parks and publicly accessible greenspaces in Cleveland are considered critical civic infrastructure necessary for a healthy city.

We seek to influence civic leaders and elected officials and to hold them accountable for making well-designed city parks a priority and to invest in them accordingly.

High-quality parks contribute to improved public health, generate economic development, and support a clean, sustainable environment. The COVID-19 pandemic further illustrated the necessity for parks and greenspaces for recreation, respite, and to connect with nature and each other.

**We envision a model for parks development and stewardship driven by residents and grassroots organizations that dismantles the structural racism which has historically created inequities in parks access.**

**We define equity as “just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Unlocking the promise of the nation by unleashing the promise in us all.”<sup>1</sup>**

## WE BELIEVE...

**Neighborhood parks and greenspaces play a critical role in the health and vitality of communities.**

**Equitable access to quality greenspace is a human right not a privilege.**

**Resident ownership is a vital component for successful parks.**

**Transparency in greenspace investment is mandatory.**

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1. <https://www.policylink.org/about-us/equity-manifesto>

**Cleveland's next mayor and city council members** will be tasked with making the changes necessary to achieve this vision. As such, we are asking that candidates commit to policies that will develop and maintain more equitable parks and greenspaces throughout Cleveland, empower community members to become involved in these processes, and increase transparency around parks and greenspace investments.

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## TO IMPROVE EQUITY,

candidates must commit to:

- Enacting and investing in policies that ensure all Clevelanders have access to safe, well maintained, high-quality parks, within a 10-minute walk from their home. This includes four-season programming and art-filled spaces that connect to larger trail and park networks, neighborhoods, and the city's waterfronts.
- Conducting an independent, third-party quality assessment of the distribution of city parks and greenspaces during the first year in office, with equity included as a measurement of quality. This document should be accessible to the public and updated every five years.
- Ensuring that parks meet the needs of and are welcoming to the communities where they are located, including residents of different abilities, races, ethnicities, socio-economic status, gender identities, and ages. Potential parks users must be represented through culturally-relevant programming, artwork, signage, and other amenities.

## TO EMPOWER RESIDENTS,

candidates must commit to:

- Creating an advisory board of community members and experienced professionals to represent the needs and desires of neighborhood residents from the very beginning of park development. This

board should meet regularly with city officials, ensuring accountability between government and community groups throughout the park development process.

- Providing resources to residents so they may advocate and care for neighborhood parks through programming, maintenance, and ongoing stewardship.
- Creating pathways to opportunity for all ages with a focus on employment and leadership within the parks system.

## TO IMPROVE TRANSPARENCY,

candidates must commit to:

- Partnering with relevant parks and greenspace organizations to develop a comprehensive parks master plan that invests in both neighborhood and destination parks. This process must be led by an independent third party, and be inclusive and accessible to everyone who wants to participate, and prioritize areas that have been historically disinvested.
- Creating a city department with cabinet-level leadership and experienced staff that includes parks and greenspaces, recreation facilities, and trails. This department should develop strong relationships with philanthropy and organizations working in this sector.
- Ensuring the City of Cleveland's parks investment process is publicly accessible in order to provide clarity around parks selection and funding for improvements.

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