

2019/2020 Local Technical Assistance and Community Planning Programs

Application Number: 38

Project Title: Highland Park Park Access Plan

Applicant: Park District of Highland Park



Project Description:

Highland Park is a car-dependent community with over 700+ acres of open space. Trust for Public Land's Park Serve analysis reports that 92% of Highland Park's residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park. While this number is higher than the average, driving continues to serve as popular mode of transportation to the parks.

Highland Park's value for non-motorized transportation is represented in local plans (i.e. City of Highland Park's Bike Walk 2030 Plan and ongoing MoveHP plan update, the Park District of Highland Park's Green Print 2024 Master Plan) and initiatives (i.e. City of Highland Park's Family Friendly Bikeways program). However, existing physical barriers, design and location of parks can be a challenge for residents to walk to their local open space. The City, the Park District and local and regional partners have pledged their support for improving non-motorized connections to parks.

The proposed project goals are to reach 100% of residents within 10-minute walk of a park and to address physical and perceived barriers to encourage the many residents that already live near open space to bike and/or walk to their neighborhood parks.

The District is requesting assistance from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning to conduct a spatial analysis with two objectives to reach our goals. The first objective is to identify the barriers to walking and/or biking to the Park District of Highland Park's 700+ acres of open space. The second objective is to highlight preferred routes to parks to inform and encourage our community to take advantage of the existing proximity to open space by utilizing bike infrastructure, trails, and sidewalks. The desired product would be a user-friendly, illustrative map that highlights the preferred routes and distances to parks.

The barriers identified through the spatial analysis will inform future initiatives to improve connectivity and open space availability through Highland Park.

The proposed project seeks to equally benefit all residents in Highland Park. Identifying preferred routes and addressing perceived and physical barriers benefits everyone including families with young children, Highland Park's growing aging community, and residents with disabilities.

If accepted, the proposed project will serve as a model for other car-dependent communities to develop tools to encourage residents to leave the car at home and choose an alternative mode of transportation to their local parks.

Project Location: The proposed project focuses on the City of Highland Park. Located in Southeast Lake County.