HIGH LINE NETWORK

Embedding Equity in Public Space

An Overview of the Community First Toolkit

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An Overview of the Community First Toolkit

High Line Network

The Network is a group of infrastructure reuse projects—and the people who help bring them to life. With 36 members, our mission is to support the creation of vibrant and equitable public spaces.

Atlanta BeltLine, Inc.
Atlanta, GA

Bergen Arches Preservation Coalition
Jersey City, NJ

Bronx River Alliance
Bronx, NY

Buffalo Bayou Partnership
Houston, TX

Building Bridges Across the River
Washington, DC

CicLAvia
Los Angeles, CA

Destination Crenshaw
Los Angeles, CA

Detroit Riverfront Conservancy
Detroit, MI

Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc.
Grand Rapids, MI

Friends of the Rail Park
Philadelphia, PA

Friends of The Underline
Miami, FL

Friends of Waterfront Seattle
Seattle, WA

Gathering Place
Tulsa, OK

Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy
San Francisco, CA

Great River Passage Conservancy
St. Paul, MN

Great Rivers Greenway
St. Louis, MO

Harbor District, Inc.
Milwaukee, WI

Hemisfair
San Antonio, TX

High Line
New York, NY

High Line Canal Conservancy
Denver, CO

Houston Parks Board
Houston, TX

Indianapolis Cultural Trail Inc.
Indianapolis, IN

Klyde Warren Park
Dallas, TX

La Mexicana Park
Mexico City, MEX

Lafitte Greenway
New Orleans, LA

Memphis River Parks Partnership
Memphis, TN

Richmond BridgePark Foundation
Richmond, VA

River LA
Los Angeles, CA

San Francisco Parks Alliance
San Francisco, CA

The 606
Chicago, IL

The Bentway
Toronto, CAN

The Meadoway
Toronto, CAN

Town Branch Park
Lexington, KY

Trinity Park Conservancy
Dallas, TX

Waterloo Greenway Conservancy
Austin, TX

Western New York Land Conservancy
Buffalo, NY

▶ **15 Network members** (white icons) helped to develop the *Community First Toolkit*.

Foreword

When the High Line opened in 2009, community leaders across the world saw a new way of looking at abandoned and underutilized infrastructure—as assets, rather than burdens. A historic elevated rail in New York City had been saved from demolition and repurposed as a park in the sky. Since then, over 62 million visitors have enjoyed the High Line for its unique public space and cultural programming.

With this success, the High Line recognized that the park and organization had the potential to do more for our under-resourced neighbors. The High Line created the High Line Network as a way for infrastructure reuse organizations to come together and commit to better serving our communities. Network members were hungry for tools that would help them ensure that their projects would generate wealth for the longtime residents and businesses they serve and avoid displacing them. That toolkit didn't exist—so we built one. Our online toolkit and this book focus on embedding equity into infrastructure reuse projects.

Over two years, Urban Institute and Harvard Graduate School of Design, alongside 15 Network members, piloted this intentional, equity-focused approach. Through this process, I saw firsthand that when committed leaders have the right guidance and tools, so much is possible.

I watched as pilot participants examined their historic context, and honestly assessed whether they were truly sharing power with community members. They grappled with articulating a common vision and mission for their work that would lead to equitable outcomes. They pored over equity goals, and developed work plans to get there, with metrics to measure success over time. I have been gratified to hear success stories about how they have used the tools to move from theory into action. Because at the end of the day, our Network wants to build more equitable, more inclusive open spaces, not just wish for them.

Our online toolkit is designed for infrastructure reuse practitioners (toolkit.highlinenetwork.org), but this book is an introduction to our work that has value for everyone. We hope it will encourage not only park organizations, but also community members, city officials, and all nonprofit leaders to get involved in embedding equity in our public spaces. I encourage you to read on and find out why we believe this work isn't something we should do, but must do. With the right tools and a firm commitment, I know it's something we can do.

Asima Jansveld
Managing Director of the High Line Network
High Line

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

A Call for Equitable Public Spaces

Why the High Line Network is working to advance equity 08-13

Chapter 2

Infrastructural Racism's Impact

How design, planning, and policy have led to inequity 14-21

Chapter 3

A Foundation for Equity-Based Work

How to set goals that benefit communities and measure progress 22-31

Chapter 4

The Community First Toolkit

An overview of the 18 tools you will find online 32-39

Chapter 5

Stories of Embedding Equity

Useful examples of High Line Network members' work 40-93

Chapter 1

A Call for Equitable Public Spaces

Practical Advice for Embedding Equity

Our public spaces—and everyone who shapes them—can play a role in advancing a more equitable society. Moreover, we believe that the people involved in infrastructure reuse projects have an imperative to address inequities caused by historic and persistent infrastructural racism by putting community first in design, budgeting, and all phases of park planning. This High Line Network book, and our online toolkit, offer steps you can take to begin, continue, and measure progress toward repairing economic and social harms that disproportionately impact communities of color.

Unique opportunities come with turning abandoned railways, bayous, highway underpasses, and more into public spaces. To successfully embed equity, infrastructure reuse must reckon with disinvestment and discriminatory development investments of the past. Looking for ways to embed equity into such projects, the Network partnered with two well-established research institutions: Harvard Graduate School of Design and Urban Institute. Together, 15 park organizations in the Network explored the potential of public space to bring social, environmental, and economic benefits to our cities and towns. Over two years, we tested approaches to organizing the intentional work that is required to make a positive difference well beyond the borders of any public space.

How We Define Equity
Grounded in diversity and inclusion, equity is the just and fair allocation of power, resources, and opportunities. In our online glossary, we define diversity, inclusion, and more.

Elevated rail before its transformation into public space in Philadelphia, PA.

Art and performance days activate the Atlanta BeltLine's Westside Trail in Atlanta, GA.

The Underline in Miami, FL, has environmental and civic benefits for the surrounding communities.

Together, 15 park organizations in the Network explored the potential of public space to bring social, environmental, and economic benefits to our cities and towns.

Whether you sit on the board of an infrastructure reuse project, you are park staff, or you live in a neighborhood where new public space is proposed, this book offers practical advice for putting community first in your efforts. We hope that nonprofit park organizations, their partners, policymakers, and community members will connect through these pages and be better prepared to share hopes and expectations for their public spaces.

Inside, you'll find 19 stories of how our members are working to embed equity into their projects. They represent a variety of designs at different phases. Whatever the capacity or budget, there are examples to point the way. (You may also want to read our *Best Practices Toolkit* for ideas on getting infrastructure reuse started.)

To ensure that this is the book of action that we intend it to be, there is an overview (see p. 35) of the online *Community First Toolkit*. We decided to publish the 18 tools online so that we can expand on the process with more guidance in the future and to have a platform where everyone can share examples of this work in action. (In the online toolkit, practitioners will find detailed, step-by-step instructions for using the tools.)

Each Network member is working on equity in their own way. The process requires a long-term and ongoing commitment. You will no doubt adapt what you read here according to your own timeline, goals, resources, and site. We hope you will share your challenges and successes with us online. Only together can we create truly equitable public spaces.

Chapter 2

Infrastructural Racism's Impact

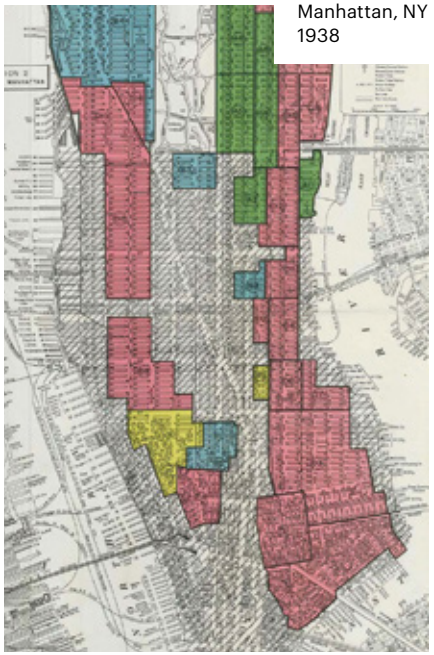
How Planning and Policy Have Led to Inequity

To shape equity-focused public spaces, we need to recognize how design and planning have historically been complicit in structural and infrastructural racism across the United States.

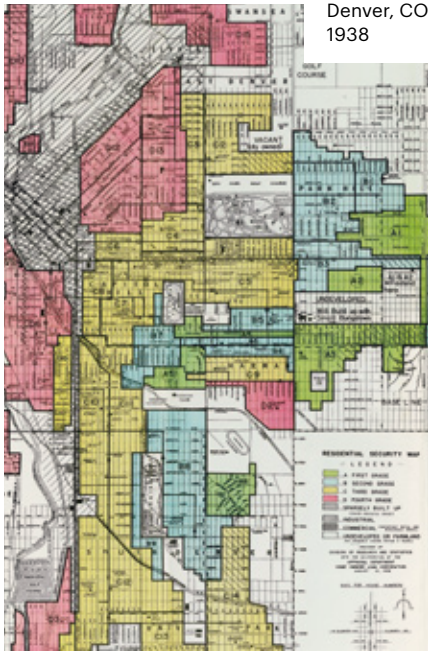
Infrastructure development has been a key means through which inequity has been inscribed across the landscape. All 15 of the High Line Network park organizations that participated in developing the *Community First Toolkit* are in cities with a history of infrastructural displacement. In other words, they are places where people were pushed out of their homes, businesses, and neighborhoods to make way for the construction of bridges, roads, airports, and more. Eleven of the Network projects are in or adjacent to redlined areas—the mostly predominantly Black neighborhoods that were marked red on government maps beginning in the 1930s, to indicate they should be excluded from home lending programs.

The 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act (FAHA) is a clear example of how infrastructure development has led to inequity. FAHA authorized the planning and construction of more than 40,000 miles of interstate highways. In many cases, these roads tore apart commercial districts, places of social connection, and sites with deep cultural roots. They disproportionately affected Black communities. Further, Deborah N. Archer writes in an October 2020 *Vanderbilt Law Review* article, "Although Black neighborhoods were the primary targets of the highways, they were not the only targets. [Latino], Native American, and Asian communities were also harmed by highway development and transportation policy." FAHA investment displaced these residents through eminent domain, isolated them with concrete walls, and exposed families to high levels of noxious emissions and toxic runoff.

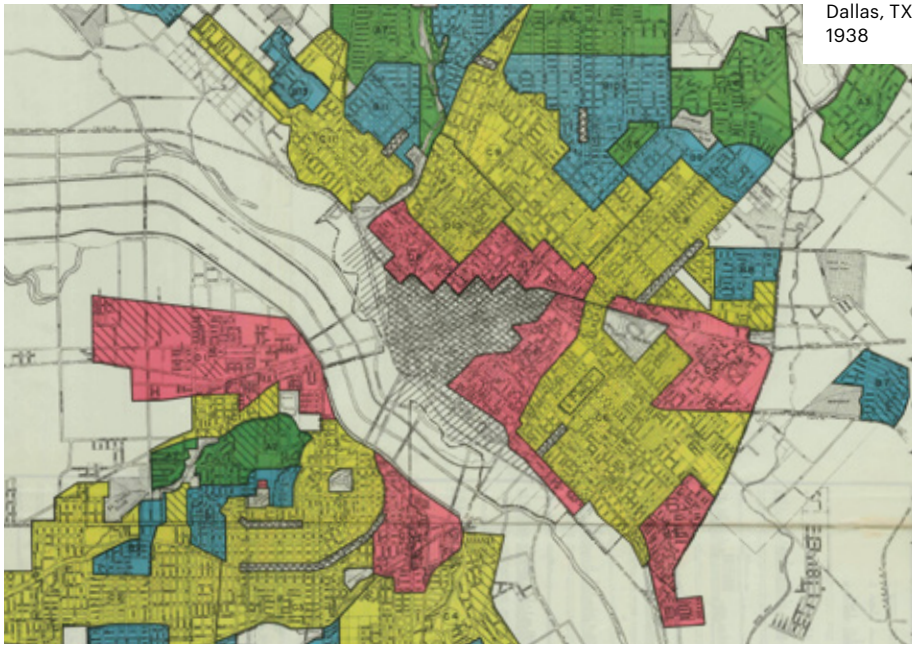
See examples of redlining maps in three US cities on the opposite page.



Manhattan, NY
1938



Denver, CO
1938



Dallas, TX
1938

Buffalo Bayou is transforming the built environment by bridging neighborhoods in Houston, TX.

By 1976, new highway construction had displaced over one million people. The destructive process of routing commuter highways through communities of color even garnered a label: "White Roads Through Black Bedrooms." By adding smooth commuting routes between the suburbs and cities, FAHA also catalyzed an exodus from urban centers. White citizens purchased homes in the suburbs with privileged access to federally backed, affordable mortgages. Smaller populations and less tax revenue, coupled with the federal government's disinterest in investing in urban areas, forced cities to cut spending on basic services—creating a downward spiral of disinvestment. With their once thriving economies systematically destroyed, more residents fled, leaving behind others who lacked resources to relocate. Federally backed "urban renewal" compounded this infrastructural racism as cities decided that signs of decline were "blight" that needed to be removed. According to the University of Richmond's Renewing Inequality project, mid-20th-century urban renewal displaced nearly 23,000 families in Chicago, and 64% were families of color. In Richmond, 97% were families of color. In Austin, of the estimated 116 families displaced, 100% were families of color.

As disinvestment continued, the communities that remained often reclaimed underutilized or abandoned spaces to compensate for a lack of quality public spaces. Cities with large Black populations, such as Washington, DC, saw communities band together to form nonprofit organizations and housing and economic cooperatives to preserve their neighborhoods. In Columbia Heights and Adams Morgan, neighbors organized to ensure they could remain in their communities in the face of expanded development. Today, however, with city real estate prices skyrocketing, these sites of historic public- and private-sector exploitation become hot spots for "redevelopment"—yet another displacement threat.

▶ **Find real-world examples** of how park organizations are examining history on pp. 48–53.

Designing Parks That Don't Displace People

The practice of displacing people—mostly communities of color—to make way for new roads continues. A 2021 *Los Angeles Times* investigation found that US road expansion over the last three decades has "inflicted a second round of dislocation and disruption on largely Black and now Latino communities." In more recent years, public space policy and design have led to inequities and resident displacement too. Uneven investment means that every neighborhood and every community doesn't enjoy equal access to high-quality green space. Park organizations' failure to fully consider community impact has also produced unintended consequences. For example, a popular new park becomes an "amenity" that helps to drive up real estate prices—and drive out longtime residents who can no longer afford the rent.

But we have a chance to address these wrongs.

When done well, transforming underutilized infrastructure into equity-focused public spaces can unleash positive economic and social impacts for communities. The opportunities are many—we estimate there are more than 100 ongoing infrastructure reuse projects in the US alone.

Of 37 High Line Network member projects, about 31 are under construction, as of late 2020. Their budgets vary widely, with the smallest around $1.2 million, and the largest $4.8 billion. In partnership with their communities, they are also taking on the challenge of democratizing public space and addressing existing inequities in our built environments.

Awareness of history opens the door to a sustainable commitment to embedding equity into infrastructure reuse projects. Armed with knowledge of the past, we are more prepared to direct resources toward baking equity into the process, honor the needs of communities, shape spaces that are true civic connectors, and spur opportunities through programs for all to enjoy.

11th Street Bridge Park, in Washington, DC, is mitigating displacement with an equitable development plan.

Waterloo Greenway Conservancy's equity principles underpin all stages of program implementation, including public space activation events in Austin, TX.

Chapter 3

A Foundation for Equity-Based Work

Setting Goals to Benefit Communities

When everyone involved in an infrastructure reuse project connects, and communities share their needs and priorities and the historic impacts of the space, you are laying the foundation for equity-based work. Park organizations will soon want to set specific goals and metrics for tracking progress.

Goals and metrics established with equitable impacts in mind have deeper, specific intentionality. They integrate employment and economic opportunity, affordable housing, neighborhood connectivity, health and well-being, cultural preservation, and diverse demographics. For example, rather than just looking at the total number of visitors to a public space, you could focus on increasing visitorship among certain local communities.

We believe the private and nonprofit organizations that are managing public spaces have a special obligation to be aware of how assets are directed—from procurement practices to employment opportunities. These everyday decisions affect how they achieve equitable impact. For example, an organization could track who benefits from a project's purchase of goods and services and be more intentional about directing those benefits to indigenous small businesses.

As we tested tools for embedding equity into public spaces, we identified **four types of goals**. They have helped to provide a focus for many High Line Network members.

▶ **Before park organizations begin setting goals,** we recommend using the Center Equity tools online.

The High Line is using new engagement frameworks to become a civic connector in New York City, NY.

Designing the High Line Canal's future is a collective effort of diverse communities across Denver, CO.

Four Areas of Equitable Impact

We recommend organizing the work of building more equitable public spaces—setting goals and strategies, prioritizing actions, establishing and tracking metrics—into these four categories. The process of aligning goals, strategies, and metrics should be revisited throughout the life of a project. This chart is aimed at practitioners who will use these categories for the *Community First Toolkit*, but the structure also offers a way for park organizations, partners, and community members to talk about metrics in a digestible way.

Thriving Civic and Cultural Life

1

Public spaces are hubs for community engagement. Tracking the different kinds of social interaction will help you understand who visits and who might feel left out and why. It may also increase your awareness of possible physical and symbolic barriers.

Common goals:

- Determine who visits and why.
- Activate the space.
- Support retention of the neighborhood's history and culture.
- Improve accessibility and connectivity to the rest of the city.

Affordability and Equitable Economic Development

2

Infrastructure reuse projects have had unintended consequences. A popular new public space might lead to a rise in nearby rents, threatening to displace neighbors. But equitable economic opportunities and a commitment to community development can be baked into projects from the start.

Common goals:

- Prevent small business and residential displacement.
- Employ local or legacy residents.
- Enact policies to ensure that the value created by public space investment/improvement financially benefits the community.

Health, Wellness, and Resilience

3

As spaces for play and physical activity, infrastructure reuse projects can help to improve health and wellness in communities. In places with inequities such as poor access to healthcare, high pollution levels, and climate change-driven heat waves, public spaces must be part of the solution.

Common goals:

- Offer programming focused on health, well-being, and climate resilience.
- Improve air, water, or soil quality with more trees and vegetation.

Equitable Organizational Growth

4

Every organization that manages public space has a chance to model equitable labor policies. In addition to external impacts, consider your internal culture too.

Common goals:

- Share decision-making power with community members.
- Create equitable hiring and pay practices within your organization.
- Diversify staff and board demographics.

How to Measure Your Progress

Metrics are essential for tracking your progress and holding yourself accountable for achieving results. Good metrics are often tied to data, but measures and milestones based on your observations and experiences are valuable too. Recurrence in measurement is key, but will depend on your resources and the scope of your activities. Metrics can be collected monthly, annually, recurringly (two to five years), or at milestone moments (every five or 10 years).

There are effective ways to measure your success with all types of equity-based goals, from reducing business displacement and employing local residents, to supporting retention of the neighborhood's history and culture. (Note for practitioners: The online *Community First Toolkit* has a complete list of metrics to consider.)

In addition to organizing by the four equity categories above, we recommend labeling goals and metrics "park-in" or "park-out."

"Park-in" describes internal work of an organization and direct actions and impacts of that organization. Examples: developing more equitable staff recruiting policies, improving board representation to include community members, or implementing local procurement priorities.

"Park-out" efforts go beyond geographical boundaries and direct activities, impacting the broader community. Examples: partnering with others to preserve or create more affordable housing, promoting more equitable policies in city government, or advocating for redistribution of public resources to address long-standing structural inequities.

Trinity Park Conservancy invests in a comprehensive community engagement process to inform their programs in Dallas, TX.

Park-in
Trinity Park Conservancy

Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. champions equitable entrepreneurship redevelopment projects, such as Pittsburgh Yards, that build community wealth along its trails.

Park-out
Atlanta BeltLine, Inc.

11th Street Bridge Park, which holds the annual Taste of the Harvest in Washington, DC, uses a park-in/park-out approach in their equitable development work.

Network member Trinity Park Conservancy developed the park-in/park-out approach to organizing equity work. One of their park-out activities is the West Dallas Community Vision Plan. Along with a community development corporation, the Conservancy lends capacity to the community-led grassroots effort, but a paid team of resident leaders runs the process day to day. Through the vision plan, the community is informing policy and investment decisions in their neighborhood, including a possible community benefits agreement tied to Harold Simmons Park, a project the Conservancy is managing.

Some goals and metrics may be park-in and park-out. For example, Network member Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. (ABI) decided to prioritize local procurement. However, through community engagement, they discovered that minority-owned and women-owned small businesses weren't bidding on ABI jobs because they couldn't meet all the requirements. ABI modified internal finance procedures and protocols (park-in)—to streamline procurement and get a more diverse pool of contractors from their community (park-out).

Community Engagement Is Always Key
Community engagement must be ongoing throughout any public space development. (However, if you're a park organization that hasn't been able to engage your community effectively upfront, be assured that it's never too late to start.) When setting equity-based goals and metrics, there are a few questions board members and staff should be asking themselves and each other.

- Are we regularly talking to community members?
- Do we have a process for incorporating community feedback into our decision-making?
- Do community members have power to influence park policy and programming (especially before implementation)?

Read more about how Network members are engaging with their communities on p. 40.

Chapter 4

The Community First Toolkit

18 Tools for Park Organizations

The online *Community First Toolkit* is designed to help park organizations address inequities caused by infrastructural racism, and shape public spaces that bring social, environmental, and economic benefits to our communities. There are 18 tools for practitioners, with step-by-step instructions, worksheets, and helpful examples. The foldout opposite this page is a preview.

There isn't any one starting point, but online we offer a quick "Start Guide" to help you find which tools your organization should use to begin. We also recommend a must-do tool in each section:

- **Create a Timeline**
  to determine where your project fits into history and the present.
- **Craft a Theory of Change**
  that outlines your vision for advancing equity.
- **Share Power**
  with community members.
- **Review Your Community Network**
  to connect with new communities.
- **Create a Work Plan**
  to ensure you achieve equitable outcomes.

Note to community members and other public space partners: While the toolkit is designed primarily for park organizations, you are essential to creating truly equity-focused projects. Please check out the online toolkit to learn more.

▶ **Open the foldout for a *Community First Toolkit* overview;** find details on how to use the tools at toolkit.highlinenetwork.org

Toolkit Section, Tools 1–4

Examine History

Know Your Demographics (1)

Who does/should our project serve?

Knowing details such as income levels and housing costs nearby will help in identifying the communities with the most need, and who would benefit from equity-focused projects.

Map Community Assets (2)

What community assets exist around your project?

With community members and partners, identify the people and places—such as community-based organizations, public transit, libraries, and schools—that are important.

Create a Timeline (3)

Where does your project fit into history and the present?

Build historical timelines with neighbors, acknowledging local milestones and how they impacted stakeholders—positively or negatively.

Connect the Dots (4)

How has your city been impacted by infrastructure and urban policy of the past?

Combine takeaways from the demographic review, historical timelines, and community assets map to tell an equity-centered story.

Toolkit Section, Tools 5–7

Center Equity

Craft a Theory of Change (5)

What is your vision for advancing equity?

Shape a concise statement about the equitable impact you want to achieve with your project that aligns with your mission.

Craft a Theory of Action (6)

What actions will you take to advance equity?

Outline, at a high level, the actions you'll take to achieve what you set out to accomplish in your theory of change.

Review Your Initiatives (7)

Are there equity gaps in your current work?

Chart current initiatives to figure out which new programs and efforts are needed or should be prioritized.

Toolkit Section, Tools 8–11

Prepare Internally

Check Who's Included (8)

Do you make project decisions equitably?

Gain understanding of your organization's internal governance structure and decision-making process to reveal who is over represented and who is missing.

Examine Your Budget (9)

Do you allocate funds equitably?

Track what you are spending and who benefits—from programming and contracting, to procurement and salaries.

Share Power (10)

How can you share power with community members?

Make a plan for centering community power, sharing funding and governance, and ensuring community partners are involved through all phases of a project.

Publicly Commit (11)

How do you publicly communicate your values and goals?

Make a public statement committing (or recommitting) to racial equity and identify new opportunities for leadership and collaboration.

Toolkit Section, Tools 12–15

Build Partnerships

Align with Partners (12)

Are current and potential partners a good match?

Determine whether a collaborator's agenda fits with yours, using a detailed checklist.

Review Your Partner Network (13)

Who do you work with and who is missing?

Identify partnership gaps and determine what new partners are needed or should be prioritized.

Review Your Community Network (14)

How will you connect with new communities?

Evaluate how you are engaging with neighbors, and the depth of your engagement with specific communities.

Maximize Your Impact (15)

Where can you make the most impact?

Determine what you might champion in-house and what you may want to pursue by offering support to other organizations.

Toolkit Section, Tools 16–18

Ensure Progress

Create a Work Plan (16)

How will you achieve equitable outcomes?

Establish a blueprint for embedding equity to help everyone in your organization stay on the same path, working toward the same outcomes.

Track Your Work (17)

How will you measure your efforts?

Organize your equitable development goals, and the metrics you will use to check your progress, in one document.

Tell Your Story (18)

How do you convey the impact of your work?

Share your impact with the public and potential funders through effective messaging.

Chapter 5

Stories of Embedding Equity

Inspiration from Network Members

With over 100 infrastructure reuse projects underway across the country, it's imperative that we view our public spaces as opportunities to address the legacy of infrastructural racism and its resulting inequities.

In the following pages, we share 19 examples of High Line Network members' efforts to ensure their projects benefit the residents and businesses they serve and avoid displacing them.

Their stories inspire and offer details about how the online *Community First Toolkit* can be implemented. They acknowledge the challenges, and highlight why the pursuit is worthwhile.

From Detroit to Miami, from Lexington to Seattle, they've engaged communities over a large geographical footprint; centered Black place-making; championed affordable housing; incorporated community input on everything from design to budgeting; implemented more inclusive hiring and procurement policies; and more.

Note for practitioners: The stories here are organized by the online toolkit's five sections (Examine History; Center Equity; Prepare Internally; Build Partnerships; Ensure Progress). Throughout, you'll find tips on using the tools.

Infrastructure reuse projects can further progress toward thriving civic life, neighborhood affordability, climate resilience, and more.

19 Stories of Embedding Equity

These 19 stories offer guidance as you use the *Community First Toolkit*.

P. 48

Capturing a Neighborhood's Past and Future
Friends of the Rail Park

P. 50

Asking Intentional Questions
Town Branch Park

P. 52

Listening Leads to Trust
Western New York Land Conservancy

P. 56

Sharing an Understanding of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Great Rivers Greenway

P. 58

Preserving Black and Brown Space and Place
Richmond BridgePark Foundation

P. 60

Identifying All the Paths to Equity
Houston Parks Board

P. 62

Teaming Up for Data Collection
Indianapolis Cultural Trail Inc.

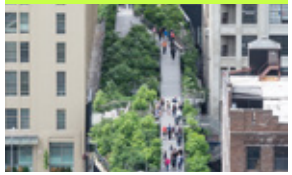
P. 66

Embracing Community Advisers
Detroit Riverfront Conservancy

P. 68

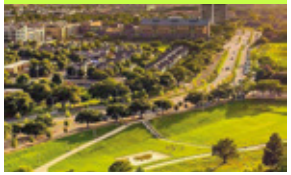
Committing to Equity, Inside and Out
Friends of Waterfront Seattle

P. 70



Putting Budget Power in Community Hands
High Line

P. 72



Fostering Board and Community Committee Connection
Buffalo Bayou Partnership

P. 74

Investing in Community Connections
Great River Passage Conservancy

P. 78

Championing Affordable Housing
Building Bridges Across the River

P. 80

Building Strategic Partnerships
Friends of The Underline

P. 82

Joining Forces for Environmental Resilience
High Line Canal Conservancy

P. 84

Collaborating for Equitable Economic Development
Waterloo Greenway Conservancy

P. 88

Rethinking Procurement for Equity
Atlanta BeltLine, Inc.

P. 90

Engaging Young People through an Equity Lens
Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

P. 92

Combining Metrics to Measure Progress
Trinity Park Conservancy

Toolkit Section

Examine History

A park built along an old railway that carried freight through a disinvested neighborhood. A trail emerging from what was once the site of a city's Black middle class. Infrastructure reuse must reckon with the histories of inequity in and around project sites. Many High Line Network members are doing the work to understand how their site is connected to legacies, both good and bad, through tools such as community assets mapping and building historic timelines.

Tool 1 Know Your Demographics

Tool 2 Map Community Assets

Tool 3 Create a Timeline

Tool 4 Connect the Dots

Capturing a Neighborhood's Past and Future

Organization: Friends of the Rail Park
Park: The Rail Park

Location	**Philadelphia PA**		**Section**	**Examine History**	
Tool 2	**Map Community Assets**		The Map Community Assets tool goes beyond demographics, to identify the people and places that are important to community members and partners.		

Friends of the Rail Park—whose project is revitalizing three miles of unused Philadelphia rail lines—took a temporal approach to creating a community assets map. The Rail Park Time Capsule will serve as a public archive of shared histories, stories, and hopes of the people who live in the 10-plus neighborhoods close to the park.

During art installations, musical performances, and tours, the organization invited neighbors to recount memories of people and places, and asked what they hoped the park would be in the future. Participants have shared fantastic memories and their park visions through written narratives, photos, songs, and illustrations. One remembered gazing at the city skyline through a train window when the rail line was operational. Another recalled sneaking into the site as a child.

A digital archiving company will create an interactive, geotagged digital map with all the information the organization gathers. Friends of the Rail Park will also look to the time capsule to inform programming, communications, and capital planning.

The Rail Park's programming incorporates history and cultural sites.

Visitors draw their vision for an undeveloped section of the Rail Park for the Time Capsule.

Asking Intentional Questions

Organization: Town Branch Park
Park: Town Branch Park

Location	**Lexington KY**		**Section**	**Examine History**
Tool 2	**Map Community Assets**		The Map Community Assets tool will help you to identify underlying tensions regarding public spaces.	

Town Branch Park did extensive community outreach to shape an inclusive plan.

In Lexington, Kentucky, a park is slated to emerge from what was once a nine-acre parking lot. A diverse group of local leaders, the Town Branch Park Partners, was formed to make sure the project lives up to its mission to be the "community's living room." They set guiding principles in a 2019 inclusive park plan that specifies "recognizing the African American history and other under-told stories connected to the site" and "collectively imagining a park that contributes to the vitality of all people and fosters a sense of belonging."

They didn't pluck these principles out of thin air. Instead, they relied on input from a community survey. In addition to connecting with the networks of staff, Board members, and park partners, they reached out to historically underrepresented communities. They provided interpreter services in the top seven languages spoken in Lexington. They arranged in-person outreach for senior citizens and those experiencing homelessness. They placed paper copies of the survey at public library branches. They hosted events where participants could talk over a meal. They got 2,077 responses—double their target.

The survey aimed to gather input on what people enjoy about Lexington's parks—and what barriers make them feel unwelcome. The community was asked to select from a list of barriers including personal, emotional, and/or cultural safety concerns; lack of transportation; lack of diversity/representation; and lack of physical accessibility. The data the Park Partners gathered is informing Town Branch Park's design, operations, and programming. And the inclusive park plan helps Town Branch Park to hold themselves accountable to the community input they directly incorporated into their plan.

"Continuing community engagement in the evolving park design has been a multipronged effort focused on providing fun and meaningful ways to encourage a diversity of voices to provide input," says Executive Director Allison Lankford.

Listening Leads to Trust

Organization: Western New York Land Conservancy
Park: The Riverline

Location	**Buffalo NY**		**Section**	**Examine History**
Tool 4	**Connect the Dots**		After you've worked on the first three Examine History tools, use the Connect the Dots tool to merge your findings into one equity-centered story.	

Nancy Smith, Executive Director of the Western New York Land Conservancy, with Dennis Bowen, former President of the Seneca Nation, and Dean Seneca, CEO and Founder of Seneca Scientific Solutions.

Early in developing a vision and design for The Riverline, a Buffalo, New York nature trail, the Western New York Land Conservancy committed to centering the current residents of the surrounding communities. And they started with an approach that any organization, whatever the budget, can do: They listened.

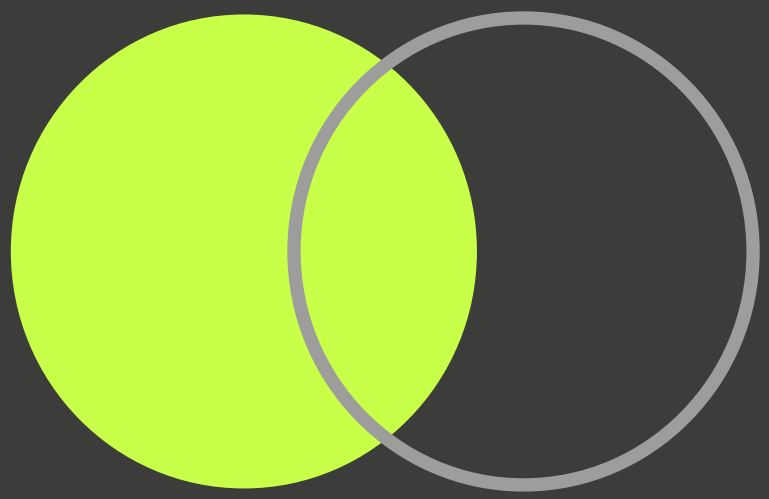
The Riverline is located along the Buffalo River, on ancestral and unceded land of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, in an area that was once Buffalo Creek Reservation. For centuries it was a place of refuge; a place where resources were rich for indigenous communities; and where the ground was fertile and water was abundant and pure. For the Land Conservancy's first listening session, which was virtual, they invited attendance through outreach to Native American service providers, academics, tribal nation representatives, and people prominent in environmental movements. Land Conservancy leadership and the involved design firms were there to hear the community's response to questions such as "What are your aspirations for this project?" and "What other resources should we explore and people would you recommend we develop relationships with?"

The engagement has prompted the Land Conservancy to center the design of The Riverline around the concept of creating a refuge and to explore ways to protect land important to the Haudenosaunee.

"As a next step in this process, the Land Conservancy focused its annual Board and staff retreat around discussions with two local indigenous leaders who are Seneca Indians," says Executive Director Nancy Smith. "It was important to respect the timeline and customs of the Nations represented, and to be flexible and adaptable where those were not immediately aligned with the assumed process and trajectory of the project."

Toolkit Section

Center Equity



Given the depth of US infrastructure's historic harm of Black and Brown communities, organizations can easily fall into the trap of wanting to "fix" everything. This can lead to confusion about your mission. And if you get too far ahead of your capacity, you could end up making promises you can't deliver. Several High Line Network members have found it easier to ground their work in equity once they were able to articulate plainly the specific change they wanted to see. You can get that clarity by using our tools that guide organizations to develop a Theory of Change and Theory of Action. You'll also want to make sure that everyone engaged in building equity has a shared understanding of definitions, historical context, and initial goals.

Tool 5 Craft a Theory of Change

Tool 6 Craft a Theory of Action

Tool 7 Review Your Initiatives

Sharing an Understanding of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Organization: Great Rivers Greenway
Park: Brickline Greenway

Location	**St. Louis MO**	**Section**	**Center Equity**	
Tool 7	**Review Your Initiatives**	As you start working with the Review Your Initiatives tool, it will be helpful to have a shared understanding of definitions and goals in your organization.		

"Inclusion—a proactive process of bringing different individuals and communities together in a way that makes each person feel welcome and invited." These words from the Great Rivers Greenway's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) plan are much more than a definition. The St. Louis public agency, which manages a three-county network of greenways including Brickline Greenway, has continually found ways to involve numerous stakeholders in meaningful, strategic work by centering this definition in its approach. To begin, Board and staff participated in training and education over two years to gain a working knowledge of the health and economic inequities in their region—and the role greenways can play in resolving some of those disparities. A DEI Steering Committee including staff, Board, and community partners then created the agency's DEI plan, which continues to advance and evolve, informing the Brickline Greenway's Framework Plan and community engagement strategy.

In creating a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion plan, Great Rivers Greenway learned about the history of their region, redlining, restrictive covenants, and implicit bias.

A Great Rivers Greenway Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion workshop.

Preserving Black and Brown Space and Place

Organization: Richmond BridgePark Foundation
Park: BridgePark

Location	**Richmond VA**	**Section**	**Center Equity**
Tool 5	**Craft a Theory of Change**	The Craft a Theory of Change tool will help you develop a statement that serves as a guiding star for your efforts to close disparities between particular populations—such as people of color, people with low incomes, or people with disabilities—and the general public.	

BridgePark is creating programming to honor Black culture in the city.

"Because of the history of exclusion of Black and Brown communities from much of the region's growth initiatives, we're about Black and Brown community place-making and place-keeping to ensure that the benefits and the power—culturally, economically, and civically—that are derived from BridgePark flow equitably to Black and Brown neighborhoods."

That short, purposeful statement carries a lot of weight with BridgePark—it is their Theory of Change, a look to the outcomes they want to achieve as they transform Manchester Bridge in Richmond, Virginia into a linear park.

A good Theory of Change (ToC) is concise, sets a vision for future equitable outcomes, and aligns with your mission. BridgePark had a "big picture" of what they wanted to do well before their steering committee started working on their ToC. They knew they wanted to address historic economic inequities in the city through economic development and education. Black and Brown communities' cultural assets and community landmarks have often been overlooked in Richmond, and affected by disinvestment and damaging urban policies.

The ToC process helped the organization drill down to the core importance of "Black place-making and place-keeping." They gained a clearer understanding of how to prioritize equitable development—and then were ready to develop a work plan.

Identifying All the Paths to Equity

Organization: Houston Parks Board
Park: Bayou Greenways 2020

Location	**Houston TX**		**Section**	**Center Equity**
Tool 7	**Review Your Initiatives**		The Review Your Initiatives tool will help your organization analyze current work and identify potential equity gaps.	

Houston Parks Board's playground improvements have been informed by its Neighborhood Partnership Program.

With the vision for a continuous park system along 150 miles of Houston waterways, Houston Parks Board is managing a project that impacts a majority of Houstonians. Sixty percent of them will live within 1.5 miles of the Bayou Greenway when complete. The Board is also playing a leading role in Mayor Sylvester Turner's 50/50 Park Partners initiative. The innovative public-private partnership, which includes 50 businesses, aims to improve neighborhood parks across the city.

To make sure there was a common understanding of what a long-term commitment to equity looks like, the organization created a staff-led task force and convened sessions across all departments and levels. Through these conversations, they established shared definitions, goals, and strategies—and built collective buy-in. The process lasted eight months. During a retreat to close out the effort, task force subgroups presented the equitable outcomes they identified, alongside strategies and resources needed to reach them. Tangible results include: a park equity investment matrix, a staff manual, and an internal equity plan.

"Bringing cross-departmental members of our organization into the discussion provided an opportunity to expand how our organization defines equity. We committed to and carefully reviewed our policies and procedures and doubled down on our commitment to equity as we design, build, and maintain parkland throughout Houston," says Communications Director Nicole Romano. "The formation of our inaugural task force was a tremendously important step, but just the first one. I am proud to be a part of the ongoing and future work we are doing to address long-term issues that require significant analysis and further work to replace systems, policies, and practices that perpetuate racism."

Teaming Up for Data Collection

Organization: Indianapolis Cultural Trail Inc.
Park: Indianapolis Cultural Trail: A Legacy of Gene and Marilyn Glick

Location	**Indianapolis IN**	**Section**	**Center Equity**
Tool 5	**Craft a Theory of Change**	The Craft a Theory of Change tool will help you get to the how of advancing equity through an infrastructure reuse project. The ToC statement summarizes the actions your organization intends to take and the results you hope to generate.	

The Indianapolis Cultural Trail Inc. (ICTI) is making data collection a team effort. With aspirations to catalyze a positive change for the people of Indianapolis through an eight-mile linear park, ICTI has set out to develop a Theory of Change. A bit different from a more general mission statement, a Theory of Change (ToC) centered on equitable development guides an organization's efforts to close disparities between particular populations—such as people of color, people with low incomes, or people with disabilities—and the general public. Developing a ToC requires conversations with a diverse set of stakeholders—staff, community members, board members, and nonprofit partners.

ICTI plans to take a data-driven approach to developing its ToC. They are gathering information at community events (ICTI-led and those hosted by other local organizations), and in spots in and around the Cultural Trail. The prompts: 1.) What place or attraction on the Cultural Trail most resonates with your experience as a resident of Indianapolis? 2.) Tell us about your Cultural Trail by identifying a place of attraction that isn't on the current map, but resonates with your cultural experience as a resident of Indianapolis.

Fundraising event on the Indianapolis Cultural Trail.

Food tour organized by Indianapolis Cultural Trail.

Toolkit Section

Prepare Internally

Readying an organization to invest funds, staff time, and relationships into equity work can be daunting. You can take several steps to better understand your current relationship to equity and how to deepen it. But this work must begin with mapping an organization's power structures. Getting a handle on existing decision-making processes—including any internal hierarchy—is eye-opening for most. Unacknowledged power dynamics can reinforce inequitable relationships within an organization or with partners and community members. With this in mind, High Line Network members have examined how they make decisions, where their ideas come from, and who approves them. Some have also evaluated power in terms of how and where the organization spends funds, particularly related to community projects and programs.

Tool 8 Check Who's Included

Tool 9 Examine Your Budget

Tool 10 Share Power

Tool 11 Publicly Commit

Embracing Community Advisers

Organization: Detroit Riverfront Conservancy
Park: Dequindre Cut

Location	**Detroit MI**		**Section**	**Prepare Internally**	
Tool 10	**Share Power**		The Share Power tool helps organizations ensure community partners are meaningfully involved through all phases of a project.		

Children design features of a Detroit Riverfront Conservancy playground.

Some design ideas for Detroit's 22-acre riverfront park were dreamed up 36,000 feet in the air, on flights to and from Philadelphia, New York, and Chicago.

As one part of an intensive community engagement process, the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy (DRFC) created a Community Advisory Team (CAT)—and then took its 21 members on the road. Divided into three teams, they covered three cities, to explore firsthand what makes a successful public space. The DRFC footed the travel bill and arranged group meetings with practitioners and site representatives in each city. "By visiting other parks, they were able to learn what other cities had done with their waterfronts to expand and adapt those ideas back here in Detroit," said Rachel Frierson, DRFC's director of programming.

After the trips, the CAT members met to prioritize the elements they wanted to see on Detroit's riverfront. DRFC gave all their feedback to the design firms bidding on the project. When the final four firms publicly presented their designs, the advisory team members saw their voices represented.

"I think about this quote that our guide at Governors Island said to us, and it really stuck with me, that is to think about 100 years ahead. I think that's what we have to do. We have to think about way down the line, children, generations coming behind us," said CAT member Denise Kennedy, after the trips.

The selection of the 21 advisers started with a public call for nominations. To ensure diverse voices were represented on the CAT, DRFC looked at gender, race, age, marital status, parental status, and geography of candidates. While providing valuable input into the design process, the CAT was also a way for the DRFC to expand its network of contacts and community groups and get their feedback. CAT members received stipends to host "kitchen conversations" and other convenings. As the project work continues, the advisory team has become a gateway to multiplying connections to other communities on the ground.

Committing to Equity, Inside and Out

Organization: Friends of Waterfront Seattle
Park: Waterfront Park

Location	**Seattle WA**	**Section**	**Prepare Internally**	
Tool 11	**Publicly Commit**	Use the Publicly Commit tool to hold your organization accountable to racial equity, and welcome new opportunities for leadership and collaboration.		

Honoring different cultures in Seattle has become a driving principle of program and event design for Friends of Waterfront Seattle.

Successful equity-based work depends on serious inner reflection—and Friends of Waterfront Seattle has taken a deep look into the mirror.

As the manager of a future 20-acre green space along Seattle's downtown shoreline, Friends' honest self-assessment has led to changes in hiring and accountability to staff. Instead of conventional cover letters, they invite job applicants to share what Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) means to them. Staff can join a Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) caucus or a white caucus. There's a biweekly DEI book club and monthly all-staff DEI training, where they discuss everything from self-care to preventing burnout.

The effort to diversify the staff hasn't gone unnoticed. According to Friends, community partners—including elder indigenous tribal leaders—said they noticed the shift in representation.

The organization has also added land acknowledgement and public equity statements to their website and across all their public-facing communications. The latter is: "Friends of Waterfront Seattle (Friends) recognizes and acknowledges historic and existing systemic racism embedded in our city. Friends is committed to becoming an anti-racist organization by prioritizing racial equity inside the organization and the public spaces we operate. Our goal is to continually cultivate inclusive spaces where all people—specifically Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), as well as underserved communities—are invited and welcome to enjoy Waterfront Park."

Putting Budget Power in Community Hands

Organization: High Line
Park: High Line

Location	**New York NY**	**Section**	**Prepare Internally**	
Tool 9	**Examine Your Budget**	Use the Examine Your Budget tool to determine who benefits from your organization's spending—and whether it is equitable.		

The High Line is backing up a commitment to equity with their checkbook: Their Neighbors Council has decision-making power over a portion of the High Line's budget. Fifteen Council members, people who live and work in the Manhattan neighborhoods the 1.5-mile greenway traverses, receive a stipend for their participation on the Council, which meets monthly. Through the Council, the High Line is able to develop and strengthen connections with community members and to elicit Council member input and ideas to better serve neighbors, small businesses, and other West Side stakeholders. One way the High Line leverages the ideas and input of the Council is through the "Neighbor to Neighbor Fund," an annual visioning process that helps elevate issues impacting the local community. Once an issue has been identified, the High Line then directs financial resources to addressing it. By engaging Council members as co-designers, the High Line wants to empower them to hold it accountable to its promise to link "individuals and communities to the social, environmental, cultural, and economic resources on and off the High Line."

The High Line created the ¡Arriba! party in response to neighbors' feedback.

The High Line's Neighbors Council is a program for sharing power and decision-making.

Fostering Board and Community Committee Connection

Organization: Buffalo Bayou Partnership
Park: Buffalo Bayou

Location	**Houston TX**		**Section**	**Prepare Internally**
Tool 10	**Share Power**		There are two tools in the Prepare Internally section of the toolkit that will help you determine who holds power in your organization and how power and decision-making can be shared with community members.	

Buffalo Bayou promotes art and public space activation in Houston's East Sector.

"This will unfold over decades, but we are committed to delivering a place that offers new economic, social, and environmental improvements that benefit Buffalo Bayou East, its existing communities, and Houston as a whole," says Anne Olson, president of the Buffalo Bayou Partnership (BBP), of the ambitious plans for a four-mile waterfront stretch in the area east of downtown. Two communities there, with deep Hispanic and African American roots, have long been underserved in regards to public space access.

As they implement their Buffalo Bayou East Master Plan, BBP plans to form three community-led groups. One for arts and culture, the second for health and wellness, and a third focused on economic development. They started with the arts and culture committee in 2020. BBP has worked to ensure these groups have real influence and decision-making power in their organizational structure.

For example, BBP already had an arts committee composed primarily of Board members. So they knew they needed to navigate power sharing and incorporate input from both committees as they work on decisions about including public art in the project. The community-led committee was encouraged to offer input on which neighborhood artists should be represented. The Board-led committee has focused on an existing commitment for BBP to include international artists.

BBP's power sharing among all stakeholders is evolving organically. The Board-led art committee and the East Sector Arts and Culture stakeholder group currently meet separately. BBP staff are ensuring alignment between the two. The committees will provide each other with feedback throughout the art nomination processes, as members slowly learn about each other.

Investing in Community Connections

Organization: Great River Passage Conservancy
Park: River Balcony, River Learning Center

Location	**St. Paul MN**		**Section**	**Prepare Internally**
Tool 8	**Check Who's Included**		Use the Check Who's Included and Share Power tools to make sure you are practicing inclusive decision-making.	

Great River Passage Conservancy invested in a process that ensures inclusion of the Dakota people's voices.

The 17 miles of the Mississippi River flowing through St. Paul, Minnesota, are part of the larger Dakota Homeland, and include several sites of spiritual and cultural significance to the Dakota people. As the Great River Passage Conservancy (GRPC) develops three capital projects to revitalize the river and bring it back to the center of public life, they recognize that this heritage is inextricably tied to all past, current, and future projects on this land. Developing and designing projects to honor the sacredness of these sites requires building trust and sharing power in new ways.

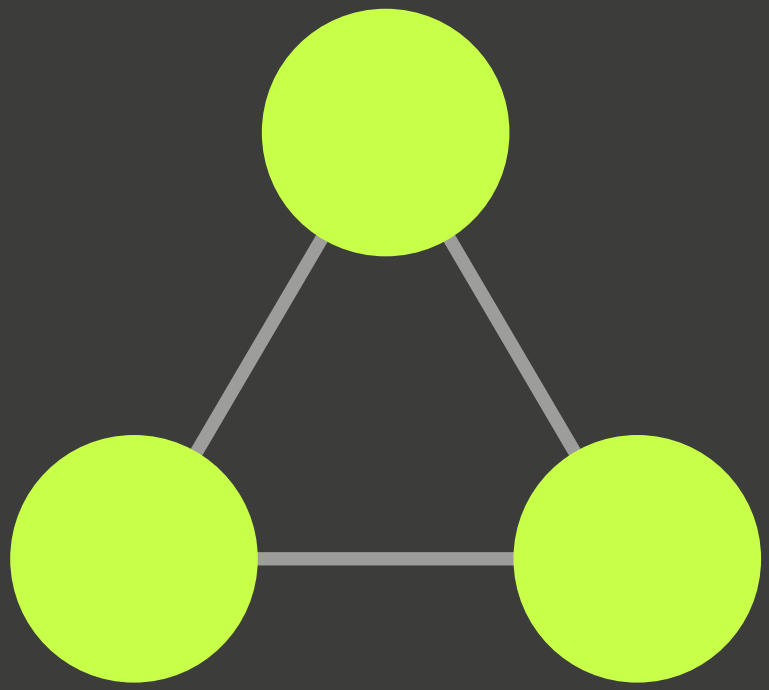
Minnesota's Indian Affairs Council often acts as a liaison between government and American Indian tribes across the state, but with so many development projects underway, tribes often lack both capacity and expertise to engage actively in design processes. GRPC set out four years ago to ensure local tribe voices were heard, and their input was integrated into the revitalization project at all stages.

The result? Today, three out of 11 GRPC Board members are local tribal representatives. GRPC mandated that the project designer incorporate Dakota voices in their work, and they raised funds to pay for a consultant to facilitate that process. Full Circle Indigenous Planning bridges the gap between the designers and tribal populations and makes sure the concerns and needs of local tribes are heard.

In the past, engagement between the City of St. Paul and its tribal populations has been piecemeal, straining the time and capacity of both tribal and agency/nonprofit staff, not to mention missed opportunities for connection and communication. The GRPC hopes their partnership with the Dakota tribe will set a new standard of long-term engagement and collaboration.

Toolkit Section

Build Partnerships



No one can address inequity alone. Great partners for park organizations can be other public space managers, government agencies, nonprofits, and community members. The partner network review tool considers where topical gaps might exist in organizations, or where power dynamics between partners hinder equity. An organization may be uncomfortable naming the specific communities to work with and ensure equity for—but doing so can be a powerful way to gain trust with people who are often ignored by such efforts. The community network review tool is helpful in such efforts.

Tool 12 Align with Partners

Tool 13 Review Your Partner Network

Tool 14 Review Your Community Network

Tool 15 Maximize Your Impact

Championing Affordable Housing

Organization: Building Bridges Across the River
Park: 11th Street Bridge Park

Location	**Washington DC**	**Section**	**Build Partnerships**	
Tool 15	**Maximize Your Impact**	The Maximize Your Impact tool will help you determine whether your organization needs to partner or play more of a supporting role in order to advance equity.		

One of 11th Street Bridge Park's equitable development strategies has focused on affordable housing.

11th Street Bridge Park, a project of the nonprofit Building Bridges Across the River (BBAR), is addressing decades of disinvestment in the adjacent Ward 8 majority-Black Anacostia neighborhood. Their equitable development plan includes affordable housing strategies to avoid displacing longtime residents—and they have formed several strong partnerships to implement them.

The organization held tenant rights workshops and partnered with nonprofit developer Manna to launch the Ward 8 Home Buyers Club. The Club offered financial education and peer support at monthly meetings, and 99 Ward 8 renters have gone on to buy their own homes since participating.

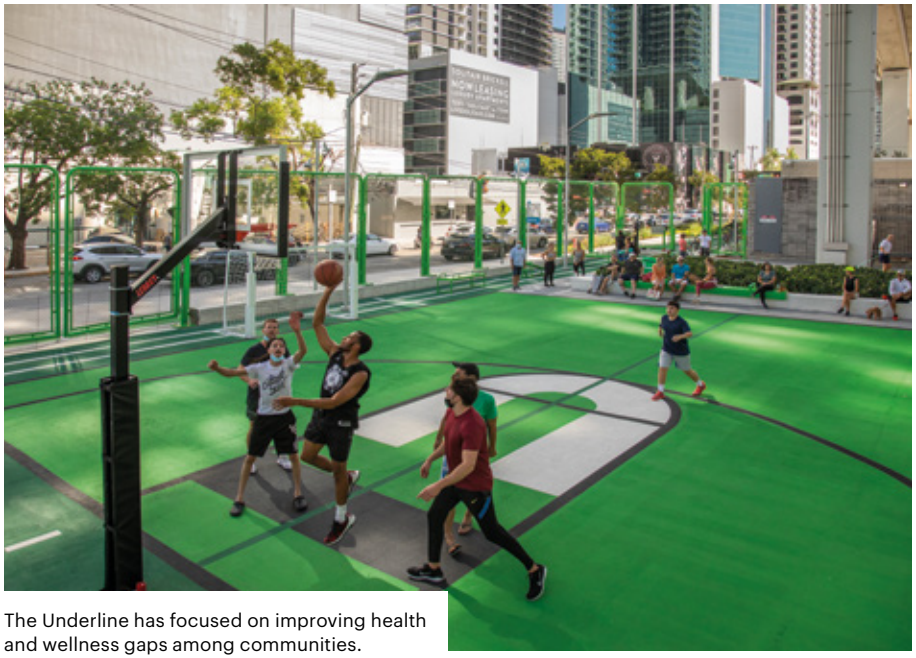
Building Bridges Across the River also started a discussion about community land trusts (CLTs). CLTs are nonprofits that purchase and hold land, often for the purpose of offering permanently affordable housing that low-income residents can lease or own. The CLT model is used across the US to sustainably address displacement in neighborhoods where rents are rising rapidly. They created a CLT Advisory Committee made up of community members. Building Bridges put them through leadership training, sent them to CLT conferences, and raised funds for early property acquisition. They also reached out to City First Homes, a DC-based nonprofit with permanent affordability mortgage programs and ample experience in this field. After four years of work, Douglass Community Land Trust (DCLT) became a full-fledged, community-led nonprofit.

Both Building Bridges Across the River and City First Homes agreed from the start that any CLT they fostered would be completely independent and community controlled. DCLT is controlled by a Board of community residents (two-thirds) and expert advisors (one-third).

Building Strategic Partnerships

Organization: Friends of The Underline
Park: The Underline

Location	**Miami FL**	**Section**	**Build Partnerships**
Tool 13	**Review Your Partner Network**	The Review Your Partner Network tool will help you identify partnership gaps and which new partners should be prioritized.	



The Underline has focused on improving health and wellness gaps among communities.

Meditation, a running track, a plaza for health and wellness programming, a basketball/soccer court, and separate biking and walking paths. The Underline's first segment of what will be a 10-mile linear park in Miami proves this organization's commitment to equitable public health outcomes. Naturally, partnerships have been central to making that vision a reality. The organization has hooked into a larger network of Miami nonprofits and philanthropies focused on addressing health inequities in the city's underserved communities.

"You have to be always looking for that next opportunity and be open to having others help you—don't think that you have all the answers," says Founder and President Meg Daly.

Going forward, they want to ensure that their spending on the next 9.5 miles furthers their public health agenda. That will require more strategic partnerships: The Underline has recognized the need to evaluate their entire network of partners for mission alignment and impact.

Up first: A basketball program is just one example of The Underline's effective partnership strategy to improve the health of all Miamians. With funding from Swire Properties and collaboration with the Miami Heat, the program intends to make sure underserved kids benefit from playing on the park's Urban Gym. Can you say "swish!"?

Joining Forces for Environmental Resilience

Organization: High Line Canal Conservancy
Park: High Line Canal

Location	**Denver CO**		**Section**	**Build Partnerships**
Tool 12	**Align with Partners**		The Align with Partners tool will prompt you to review your external relationships through the lens of our four equity categories (see p. 26) —including Health, Wellness, and Resilience.	

Extensive community engagement over 71 miles is a High Line Canal Conservancy priority.

When the High Line Canal Conservancy was formed in 2014 to bring together regional partners and plan a vibrant future for the old 71-mile irrigation canal in Colorado's Denver metro area, one question was constant: What about the water? With present-day water challenges typical of rapidly growing regions, Denver Water, the public agency that owns the canal, has been gradually moving irrigation customers to more sustainable water sources. The shift has created a need for creative solutions to maintain the 860 acres of open space around the canal as a recreational and ecological resource.

Through an innovative partnership and with a goal of maximizing the environmental benefits of the High Line Canal to the region, the Conservancy, Denver Water, and governmental partners worked together to study the feasibility of repurposing the system for stormwater management.

Ultimately, 62 of the 71 miles were found usable for water quality improvement and flood mitigation. Redirecting stormwater into the canal has helped alleviate the environmental impact of new development. Redirected water, especially in Denver's northeast communities, will also help vegetation grow in places where green space has been lacking and make them more resilient.

This partnership has yielded direct benefits for the Conservancy too: Denver Water recently pledged a historic $10 million toward long-term care of the Canal. "The Canal provides an incredible opportunity for our region to repurpose aging infrastructure in a sustainable, forward-thinking way. The transition of the Canal will help preserve a piece of Colorado history in perpetuity using modern-day modifications to allow for stormwater conveyance," says Harriet Crittenden LaMair, Executive Director of the High Line Canal Conservancy.

Collaborating for Equitable Economic Development

Organization: Waterloo Greenway Conservancy
Park: Waterloo Greenway

Location	**Austin TX**		**Section**	**Build Partnerships**
Tool 15	**Maximize Your Impact**		The Maximize Your Impact tool is focused on helping you figure out how to best work with partners who share your goals.	

Frida Friday ATX in Waterloo Greenway supports Austin's creative economy.

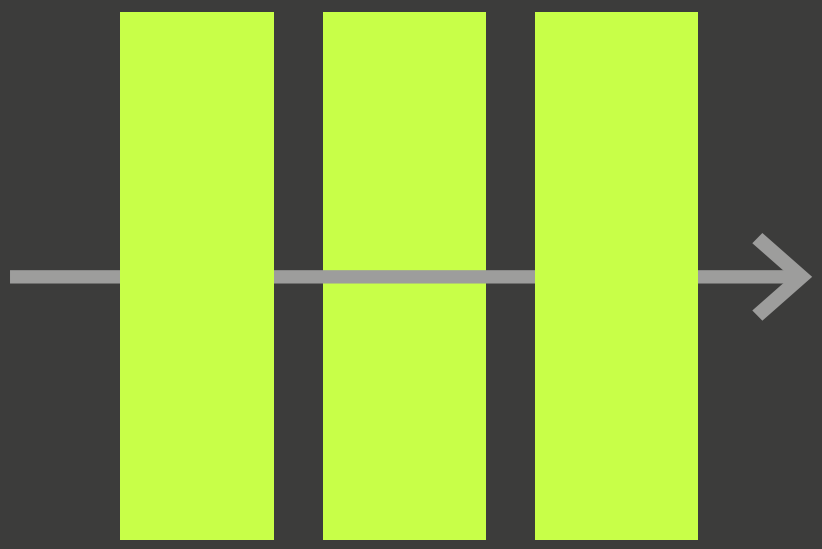
When Waterloo Greenway was preparing to open its first phase, COVID-19 hit. The pandemic's economic fallout severely affected Austin's small and minority-owned businesses. Waterloo Greenway Conservancy worked closely with other organizations in Downtown Austin, lending resources and new park features and assets—the Moody Amphitheater opened in August 2021—to help community partners and the city at large bounce back.

The Board's Community Engagement Committee teamed up with the boards of local partners, such as the Red River Cultural District. They collaborated on programming that fostered revenue opportunities for small businesses and partners in the District. The Conservancy's engagement and outreach staff promoted downtown cultural destinations, restaurants, bars, and hotels, and invited local artists to showcase their work in Waterloo Park. They organized an in-person market at the park and four artist workshops. They promoted all events across the city and on social media. They also provided funding support for five virtual markets hosted by Frida Friday ATX, which describes itself as "an intentionally intersectional grassroots movement that supports and amplifies BIPOC, WoC and community creatives." The virtual markets featured 50 vendors and reached 2,000 viewers each month.

Toolkit Section

Ensure Progress

Our toolkit is designed so that your progress—and success—with embedding equity can be tracked, measured, and shared. Our tools for creating a work plan and measuring impact point the way to drawing a clear line between an organization's goals, activities, and resources. They allow practitioners to dig deep into the metrics and indicators and identify who is responsible for making progress toward achieving set goals. They can also be a way for park organizations, partners, and community members to mark progress and collectively recognize challenges. Tracking progress isn't the end of the equity journey: The goal is continual improvement.



Tool 16 Create a Work Plan

Tool 17 Track Your Work

Tool 18 Tell Your Story

Rethinking Procurement for Equity

Organization: Atlanta BeltLine, Inc.
Park: Atlanta BeltLine

Location	**Atlanta GA**	**Section**	**Ensure Progress**	
Tool 16	**Create a Work Plan**	In the Create a Work Plan tool, you can choose from a list of hundreds of possible metrics to track your progress toward equitable outcomes. Measuring your efforts may lead to beneficial organizational changes that will support embedding equity in your project.		

Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. supports equitable economic growth through urban redevelopment projects along its railway corridor-turned-multiuse trail.

Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. (ABI) set ambitious goals to foster economic development with a $20 billion investment—but they soon realized they were falling short on their aim to work with more disadvantaged business enterprises (DBEs) in the city.

Through intensive outreach, ABI, which operates a railway corridor-turned-multiuse trail in the Georgia capital, identified roadblocks that were preventing DBEs from answering their requests for proposals. Turns out, their payment schedules weren't ideal for DBEs, which often have less sustaining capital and therefore need to be paid more quickly. ABI's insurance requirements were also deemed cumbersome.

So ABI modified their procurement policy. They worked with their finance department to pay vendors within three months. They also launched a vendor registry portal where they publish their contracting needs, answers to frequently asked questions, and helpful resources like a video that explains how vendors can become eligible to do business with ABI. ABI is tracking DBE participation and, as of 2021, they have a new goal: 50% of procurement contracts held by DBEs by 2024.

Engaging Young People through an Equity Lens

Organization: Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy
Park: Crissy Field

Location	**San Francisco CA**	**Section**	**Ensure Progress**
Tool 16	**Create a Work Plan**	The Create a Work Plan tool offers hundreds of ideas for tangibly measuring progress toward your equitable outcome goals.	

Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy established metrics to track progress on their efforts to engage more youth of color.

Get young people from San Francisco communities with a historic lack of access to high-quality public spaces involved. Focus on engaging local youth of color and young people from low-income households. These are the types of lofty goals that all too often float untethered from real impact. But Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (GGNPC) is determined to make it a reality—and they have carefully established metrics to track progress.

GGNPC, which jointly operates Crissy Field with the National Park Service, started implementing new metrics of success with their Academic Internship Program in summer 2021. Each summer, they partner with three area colleges that serve diverse student bodies, predominantly from the San Francisco Bay Area. They offer internships in natural resources, youth education, geographic information systems, and more. Students get technical training and mentorship, and build workplace and leadership skills.

In 2021, they decided to track the change in number of applicants compared to the prior year, and collect social and demographic data (for example, ethnicity, age, gender, education level). They also counted the number of interns from the Bay Area compared to non-local interns. Finally, they tracked the number of interns who qualified for and/or were receiving financial aid. Within a few months, GGNPC was able to connect outreach activities to positive outcomes—with the numbers to back it up. For example, staff participated in school career fairs, hosted a webinar for interested applicants, and promoted the internships on social media and through partner networks. In 2021, the number of applicants increased by 22% compared to the year before. Of those, there was an increase in Asian youth by 32%, Hispanic/Latino youth by 25%, and Native American/American Indian youth by 4.7%. Of the interns hired, 71% were students who qualified for and/or received financial aid, and 65% were from the San Francisco Bay Area.

These numbers are helping the organization to tell a story about impact and better evaluate which activities produce results.

Combining Metrics to Measure Progress

Organization: Trinity Park Conservancy
Park: Harold Simmons Park

Location	**Dallas TX**	**Section**	**Ensure Progress**	
Tool 17	**Track Your Work**	The Track Your Work tool will help you organize your actions and activities in support of your goals and sharing your impact externally.		

Equitable development workshop led by Trinity Park Conservancy.

Trinity Park Conservancy has set out to do much more than check off boxes on their way to embedding equity.

Their October 2019 equitable development plan outlines equity-focused priorities for Harold Simmons Park in Dallas, the first project in their Trinity River waterfront revitalization. And to clearly measure their progress, they combine qualitative and quantitative metrics. The effort requires going beyond posting someone at a meeting door with a clicker counter. For example, rather than tracking the number of meetings or participants per event, they track the recurrence of participants. In this way, they can assess the depth of engagement.

Another useful metric: the number of community-originated program ideas. Not only do they monitor how ideas are generated, but also whether they are funded or implemented. Such quantitative-plus-qualitative tracking offers valuable insight into whether the Conservancy's own structure is designed to incorporate community decision-making power. Since participating in the High Line Network's embedding equity pilot, they have greatly increased the number of community members serving on committees.

"Harold Simmons Park is a transformational project for the City of Dallas, and the Conservancy wants to work with community partners to make sure that the community surrounding the Park is able to participate in the economic opportunities that it will bring," says President and CEO Tony Moore.

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P. 45
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Park Conservancy

P. 48
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P. 49
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of the Rail Park

P. 50
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P. 52
Photo: Courtesy of Western
New York Land Conservancy

P. 56
Photo: Courtesy of Great
Rivers Greenway

P. 57
Photo: Courtesy of Great
Rivers Greenway

P. 58
Photo by: Keshia Eugene
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P. 60
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Board

P. 62
Photo: Courtesy of Indianapolis
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P. 63
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P. 66
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P. 68
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P. 70
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P. 71
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P. 72
Photo: Courtesy of Buffalo
Bayou Partnership

P. 74
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Community

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Bridge Park

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P. 82
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Canal Conservancy

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Greenway Conservancy and
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P. 92
Photo: Courtesy of Trinity
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Photo Index

Atlanta BeltLine, Inc.
p. 12, 29, 45, 88

Buffalo Bayou Partnership
p. 18, 43, 44, 72

Building Bridges Across the River
p. 21, 30, 45, 78

Detroit Riverfront Conservancy
p. 45, 66

High Line
p. 25, 44, 70, 71

Friends of the Rail Park
p. 11, 44, 48, 49

Friends of The Underline
p. 12, 45, 80

Friends of Waterfront Seattle
p. 45, 68

Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy
p. 45, 90

Great River Passage Conservancy
p. 45, 74

Great Rivers Greenway
p. 45, 56, 57

High Line Canal Conservancy
p. 25, 44, 82

Houston Parks Board
p. 43, 44, 60

Indianapolis Cultural Trail Inc.
p. 45, 62, 63

Richmond BridgePark Foundation
p. 44, 58

Town Branch Park
p. 45, 50

Trinity Park Conservancy
p. 29, 45, 92

Waterloo Greenway Conservancy
p. 21, 44, 84

Western New York Land Conservancy
p. 45, 52

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The High Line Network is a strategic hub for infrastructure reuse projects—and the people who are helping them come to life.

On our own, we don't have all the answers. And we never will. But together, we're defining equity-focused practices and championing their importance to the public and field at large.

Projects in the High Line Network are transforming underutilized infrastructure into new urban landscapes. Redefining what a park can be, these hybrid spaces are also public squares, open-air museums, botanical gardens, social service organizations, walkways, transit corridors, and more. Often, our member projects employ innovative models of public space governance, employing complex public/private partnerships with unique management, funding, and operations challenges.

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