

Evaluating Environmental Justice and Organizational Partnerships for Green Space in Worcester, MA

Project
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WPI

Worcester Community
Project Center

Race and Income are Direct Factors in Distributing Environmental Goods

Environmental Justice:

Fair distribution of resources and attention to environmental issues to all areas of a region without consideration for race, ethnicity, or income.



Equity is a Driving Force for Understanding Human-Environment Relations When Looking at Environmental Justice



“An equitable city improves circumstances for those with more limited choices.”

“Using a top tier mindset while catering to lower and middle class needs.”

-Jeremy Nowak (2018)

Environmental Movements Should Reflect the Needs of All

**“In the fourth quadrant
(lower right), working-class
people are motivated to take
on green-collar jobs and
start green businesses.”**

-Van Jones

**GREY
(PROBLEMS)**



RICH

**GREEN
(SOLUTIONS)**

POOR

Environmental Justice is Especially Relevant to Shrinking Cities

Shrinking Cities:

Cities that experience drastic population loss generally associated with deindustrialization.



Green Space Has Particular Value in Shrinking Cities

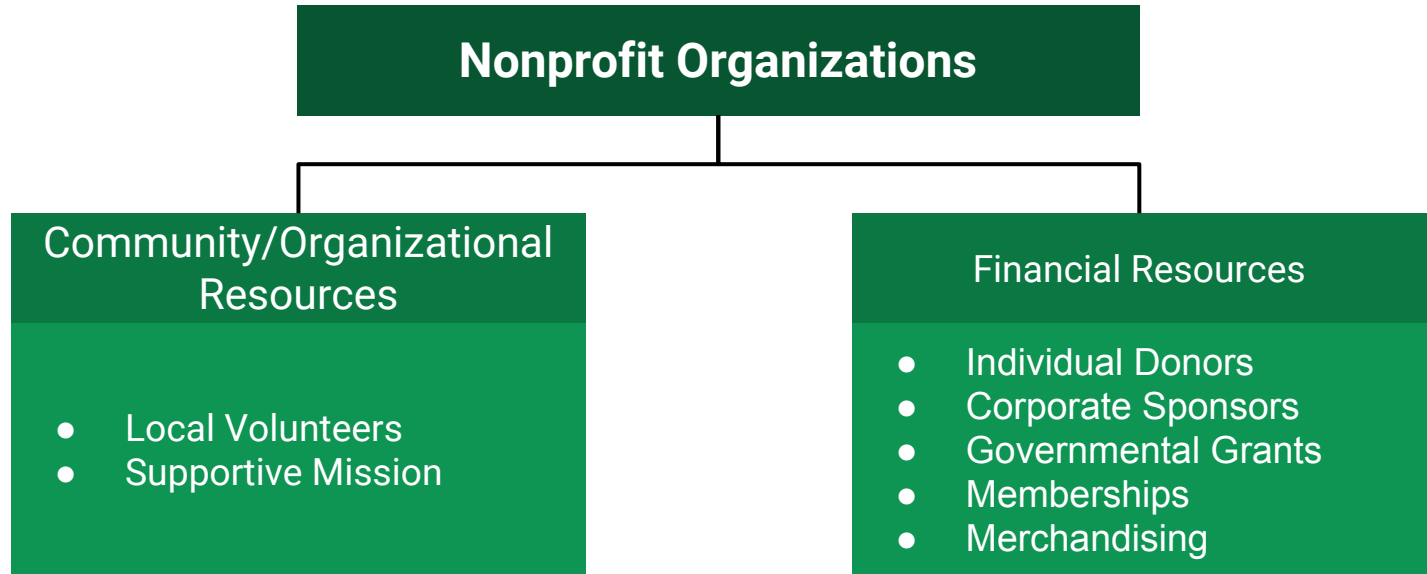
| Urban greening effect (sources) | Environmental | Social | Economic |
|---|---------------|--------|----------|
| Provide opportunity to create community through social interactions | | X | |
| Increase physical activity opportunities | | X | X |
| Reduce Crime and Domestic Violence | | X | X |
| Increase Potential Consumer Spending | X | X | X |

Adapted from Schilling, J. & Logan J. (2008) Summary of urban greening benefits.

The Civic Sector an Important Vehicle for Creating Equitable Green Space

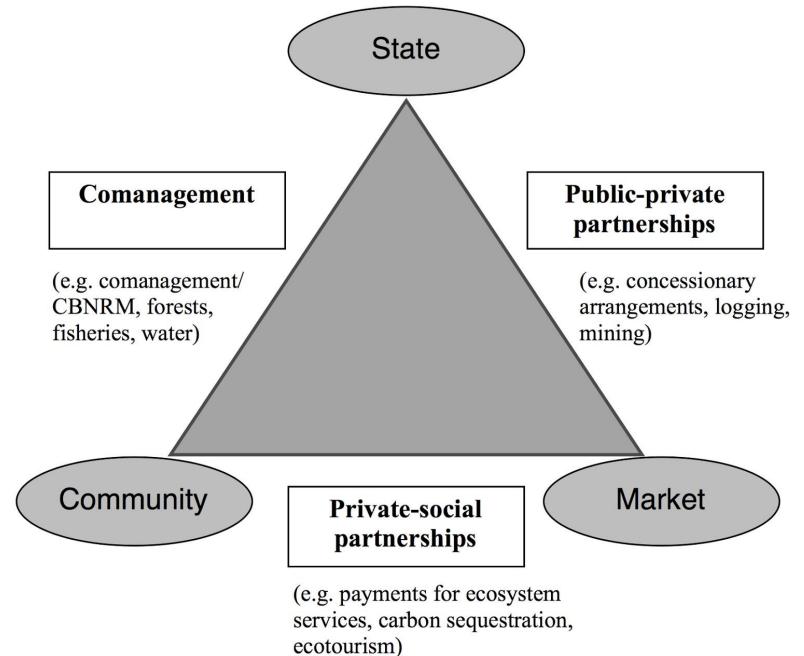


The Civic Sector Needs Organizational and Financial Resources to Further Their Mission



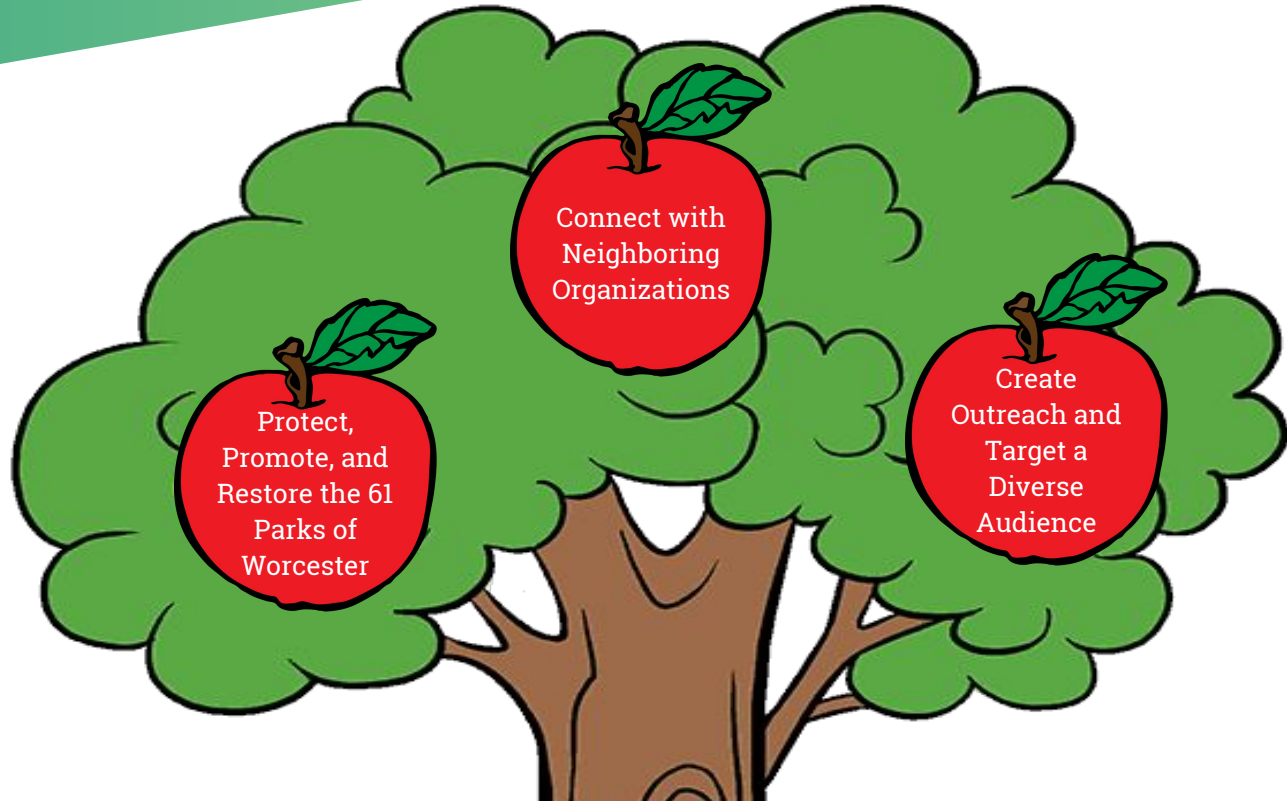
Partnerships are Critical to the Success of Environmental Nonprofit Organizations

“No single agent possesses the capabilities to address the multiple facets, interdependencies, and scales of environmental problems.”



Lemos and Agrawal (2006).

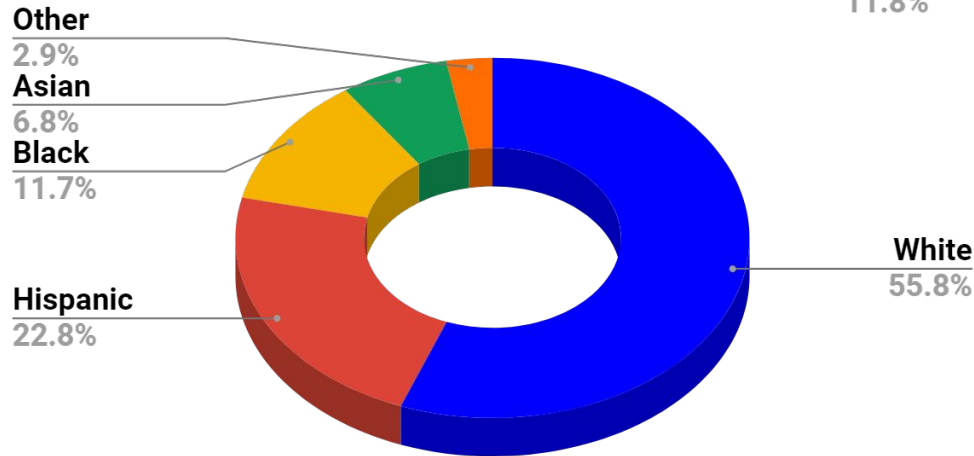
Our Sponsor: Park Spirit of Worcester, Inc.



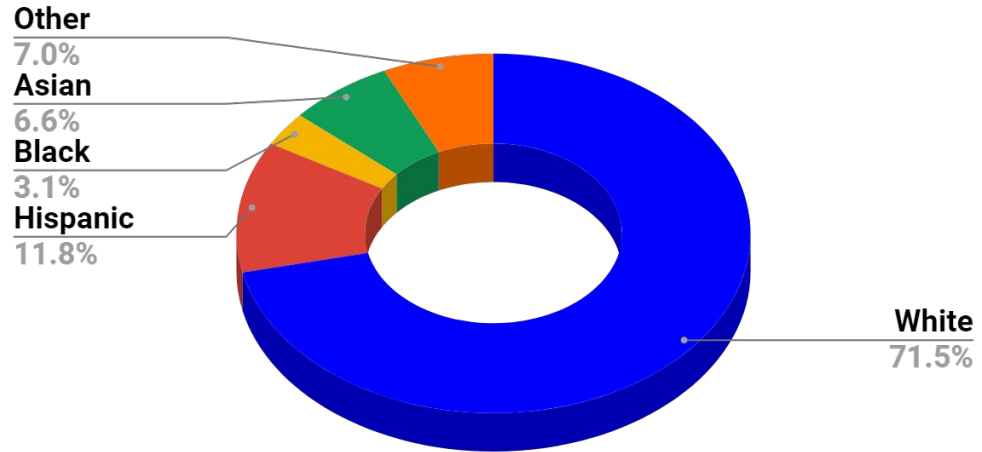
PARKSPIRIT
of Worcester, Inc.

Worcester Has a Diverse Demographic

Worcester Demographic



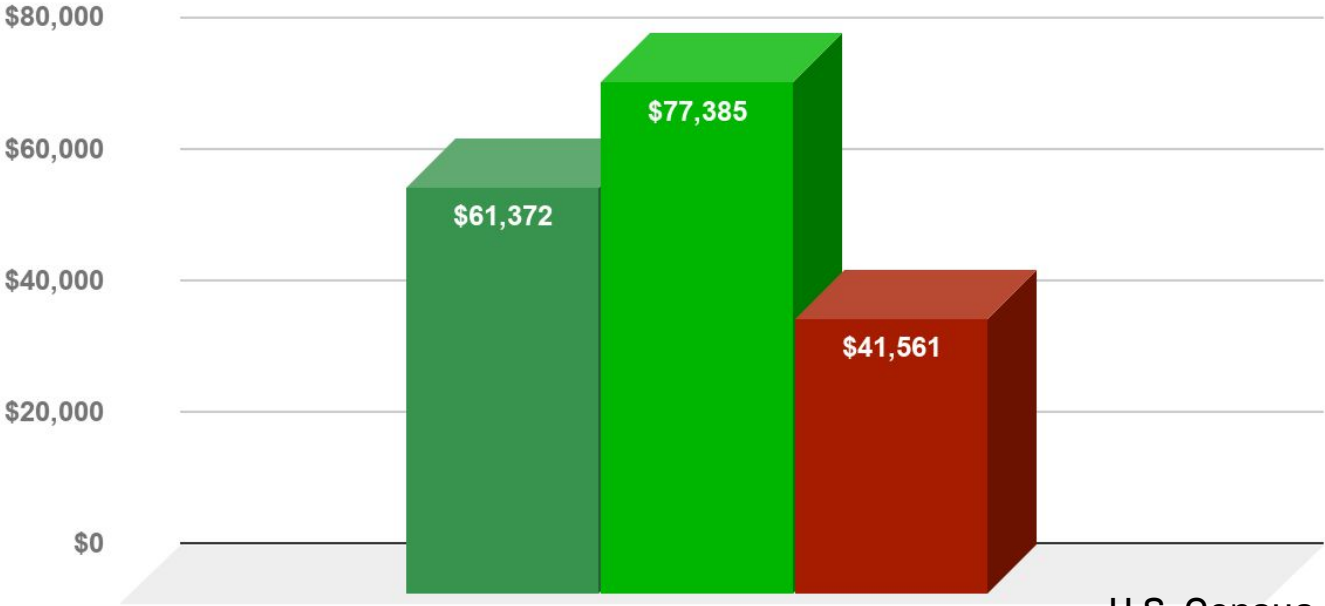
Massachusetts Demographic



Worcester Residents Have Lower Than Average Household Income

Average Household Income

■ National ■ Massachusetts ■ Worcester



Our Research Approach For Analyzing Worcester's Green Space

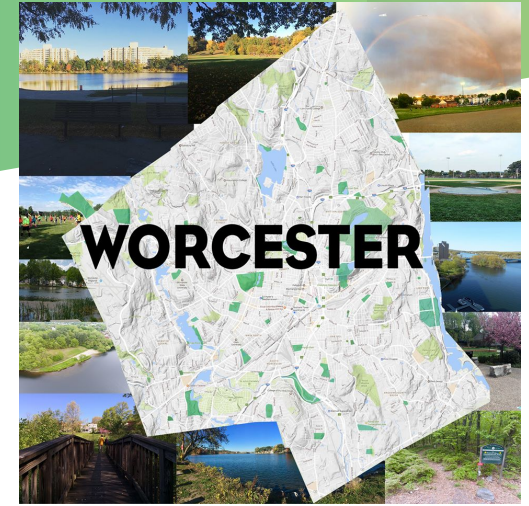
Is there a case to be made for environmental justice in Worcester parks?

How do partnerships and resources play into improving park advocacy?



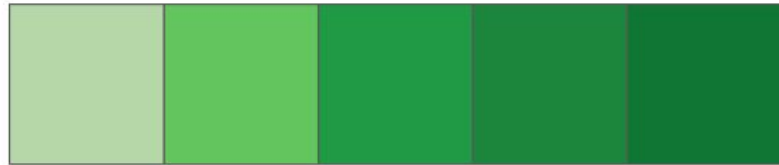
The group with a Worcester Park Representative

We Analyzed Environmental Justice for Park Management in Worcester



Spatial Analysis Breakdown

Environment - Open Space



Low Household
Income

High Household
Income

Diversity for this mapping is the likelihood of two individuals randomly selected from the same area being different racially or ethnically.



0
(no diversity)

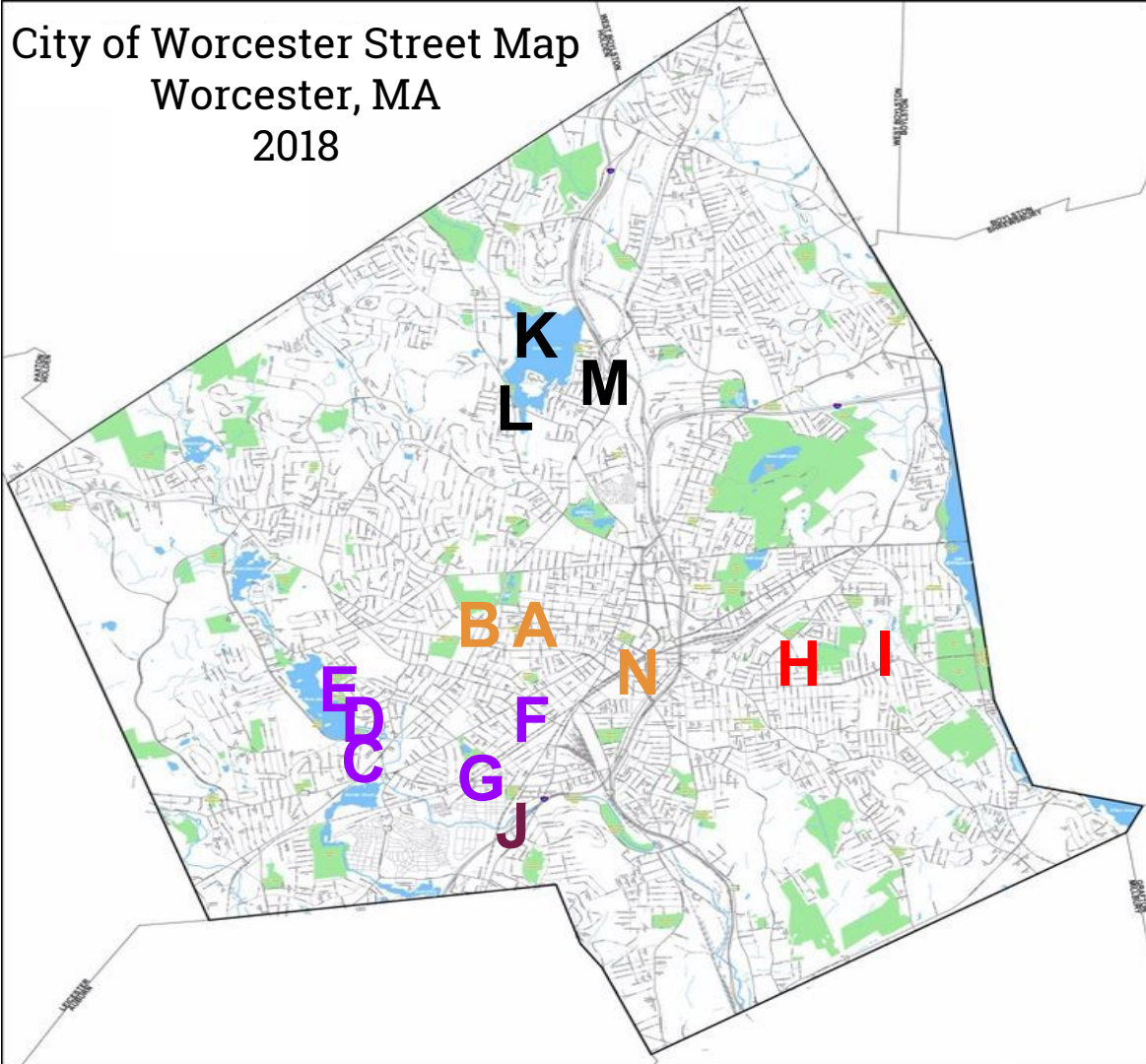
100
(complete diversity)

Parks Visited

- A** Elm Park
- B** Newton Hill
- C** Coes Knife Park
- D** Columbus Park
- E** Knights of Columbus Park
- F** Castle Park
- G** University Park
- H** Shale St Playground
- I** Holmes Field
- J** South Worcester Playground
- K** Shore Park
- L** Morgan Landing
- M** Indian Lake Beach
- N** Worcester Common

-  = Central
-  = South West
-  = South Central
-  = North
-  = East

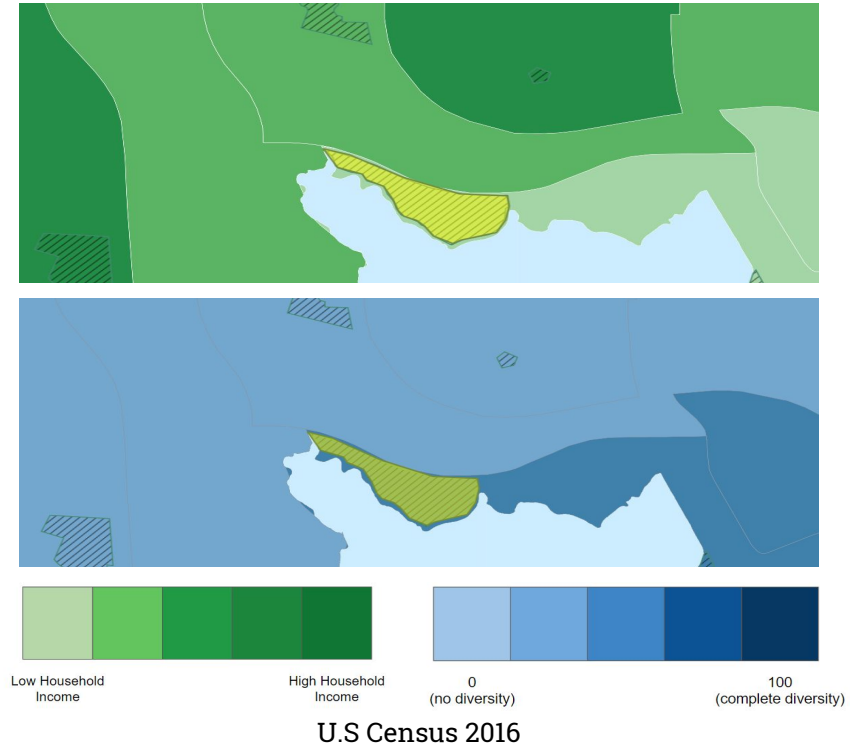
City of Worcester Street Map
Worcester, MA
2018



North Worcester

Shore Park received about \$200,000 from the city for the construction of a new bathroom and storage unit

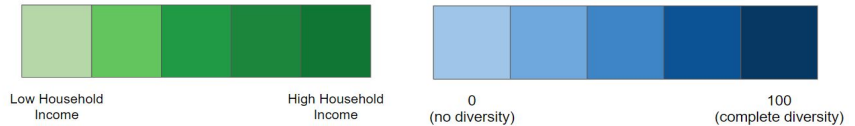
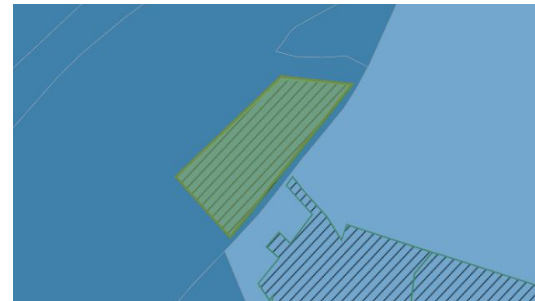
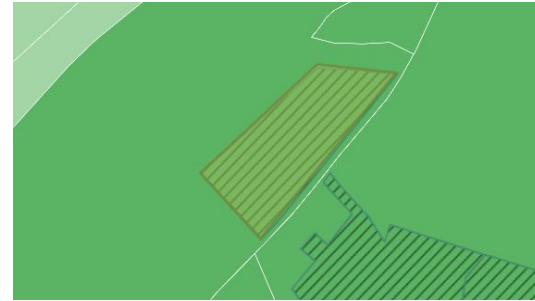
Income and Diversity Maps of K. Shore Park



East Worcester

Holmes Field is currently under construction with new baseball fields, tennis courts, and play areas coming soon.

Income and Diversity Maps of I. Holmes Field

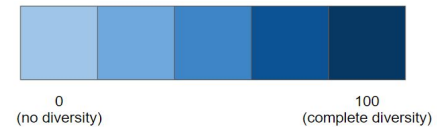
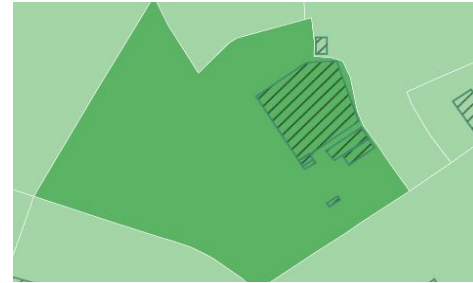


U.S Census 2016

South Central Worcester

Castle park received \$2 million to fully fund all phases of their master plan

Income and Diversity Maps of F. Castle Park

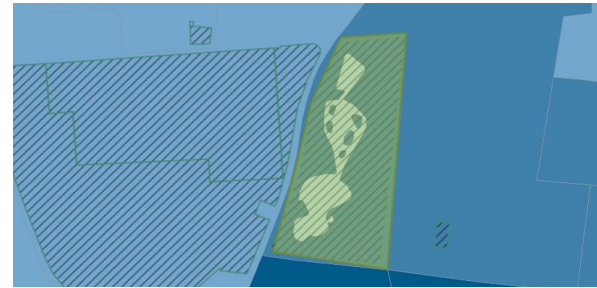


U.S Census 2016

Central Worcester

Three years ago, Elm park received several million dollars for benches, lights, paths, bridges, and retaining the surrounding walls.

Income and Diversity Maps of A. Elm Park Area



Low Household
Income

High Household
Income



0
(no diversity)

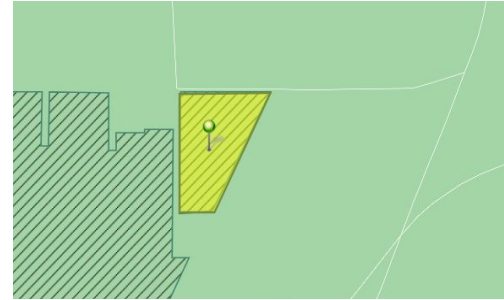
100
(complete diversity)

U.S Census 2016

South West Worcester

The South Worcester Playground will receive \$250,000 for the next four years to complete master plan.

Income and Diversity Maps of J. South Worcester Playground



Low Household
Income

High Household
Income

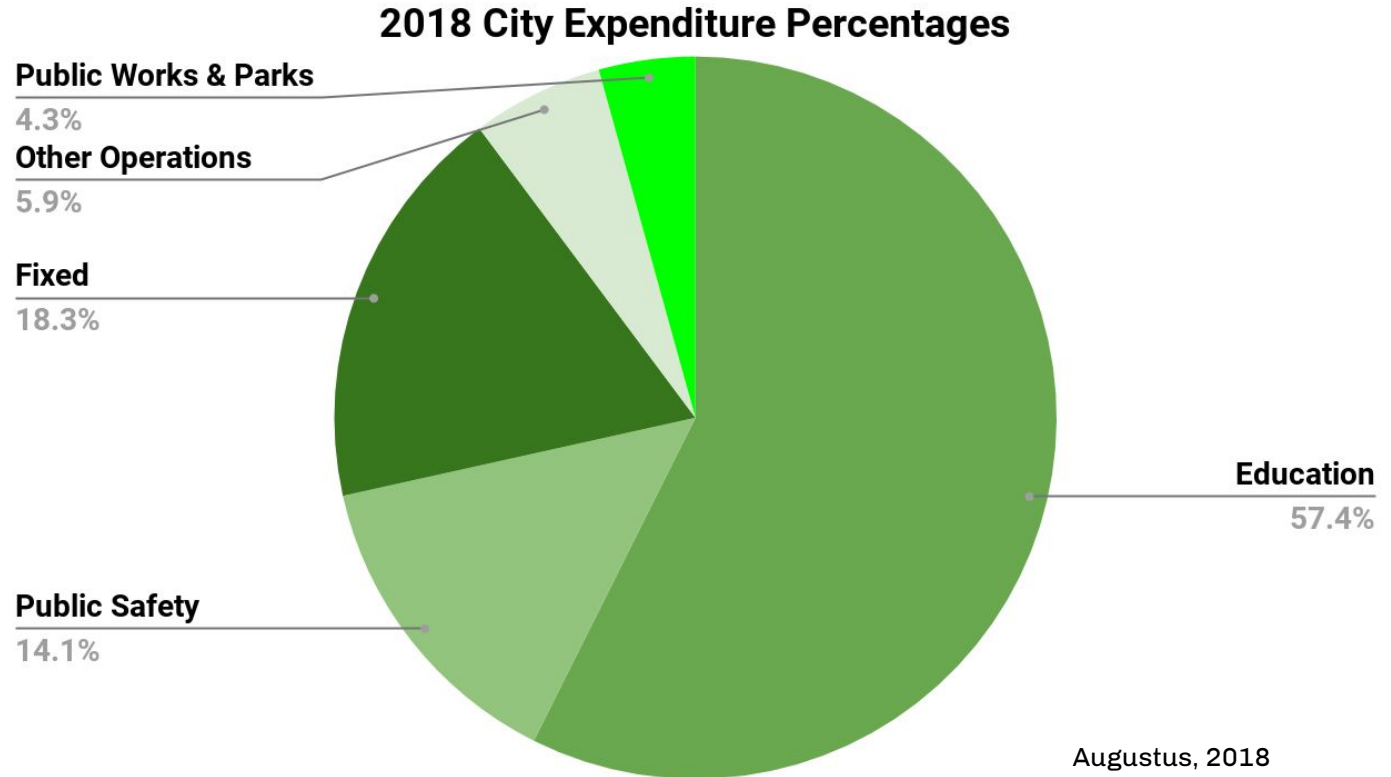


0
(no diversity)

100
(complete diversity)

U.S Census 2016

There is Limited Park Funding Available in the City's Budget



Park Improvements Illustrate Worcester's Changing Mindset

\$50 million Increase for Park Capital Budget

Parks and Rec Staff Nearly Doubled

Creation of 3 Dog Parks, After Strict Prohibition



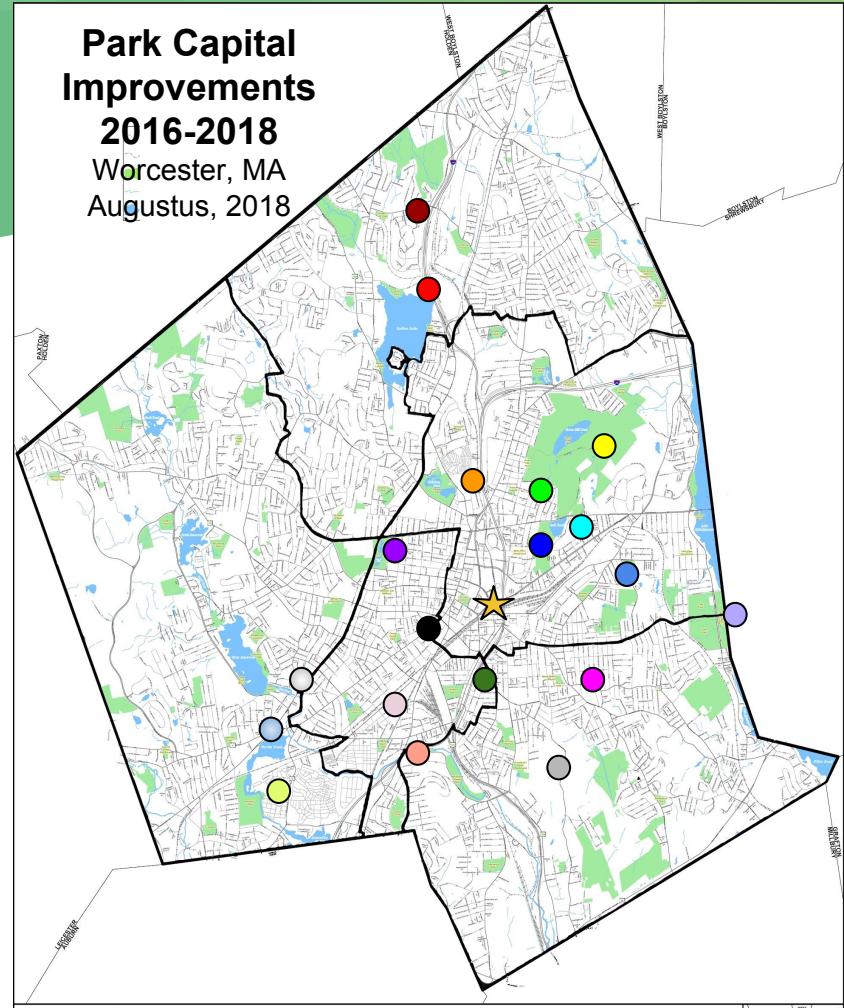
Park Improvements Illustrate Worcester's Changing Mindset

Park Improvement Map Legend:

- Green Hill Park
- Castle Park
- Crompton Park
- ★ City Hall
- Elm Park
- Coes Park
- Shore Park
- Providence Street Playground
- Grant Square Park
- Holmes Field
- Mulcahy Field
- South Worcester Playground
- University Park
- Betty Price Park
- Hadwen Park
- Institute Park
- Lake Park
- Bennett Field
- Indian Hill
- Bell Hill Park

Park Capital Improvements 2016-2018

Worcester, MA
Augustus, 2018



City Officials are Increasing Focus on Green Space and Healthy Living

“At one time, quality parks were seen as luxury in Worcester; now we see them as a necessity”

- A High Ranking City Official

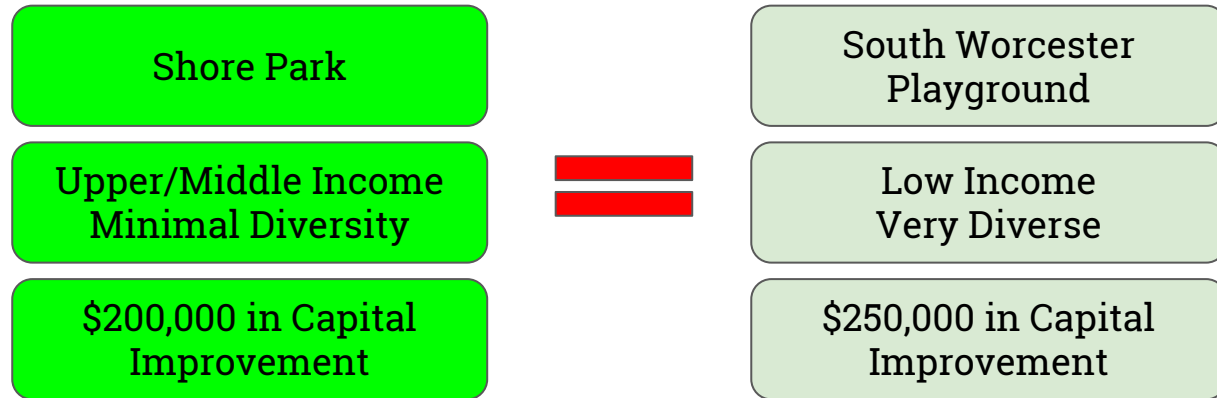
“About ten years ago there was a big increase in park revitalization from the city.”

- A Neighborhood Park Representative



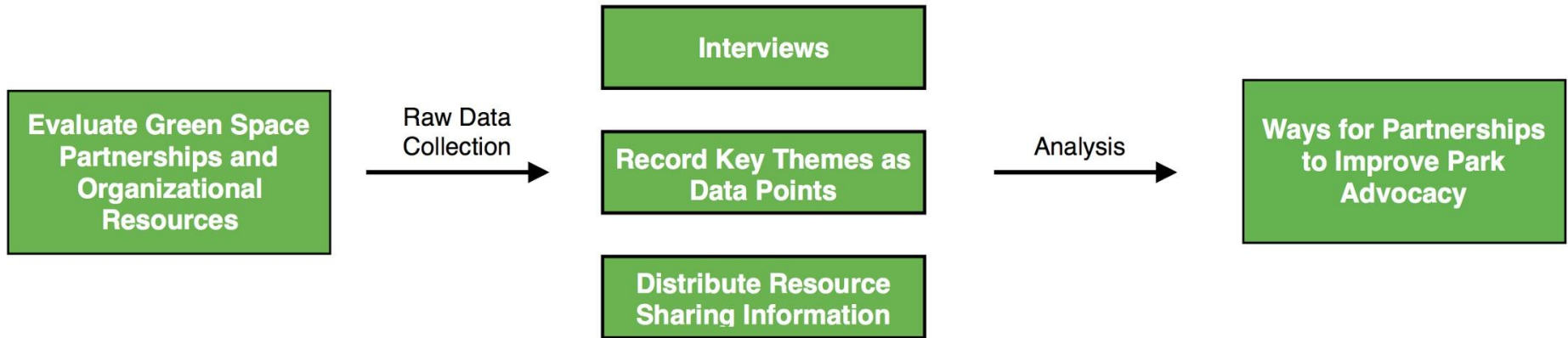
Brandon and Steven with City Manager Augustus

Environmental Justice is Not an Issue for Park Management in Worcester



The city has equitably distributed funding to green space around Worcester

We Characterized the Types of Organizational Partnerships and Resources that Strengthen Parks Advocacy



Cohesive Partnerships are the Key to Increased Funding and Green Space Benefits

Transparent Relationships

Aligning Mission Statements

Constant Communication



Resource Sharing Through Partnerships

Donations
Programming
Outreach Programs
Funding
Safety
Volunteer Support/Staff



Driven Group of Park Advocates with a common goal working to get the most out of Worcester's Green Space

Safety, programming, and financial partnerships are the most critical for immediate park improvement

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Safety Partnerships | Determined Through City and Community Interviews | University Park & WPD |
| Programming Partnerships | 8/13 Parks Want improved Programming 6/13 Interested in Concert Series | Coes Park & Seven Hills Foundation |
| Financial Partnerships | 13/13 Could use Financial Support | Friends of Newton Hill & Blue Jeans Pizza |

Further Research Themes

Capital Improvements
vs Maintenance

Politics Play a Role in
Green Space

**“Capital Improvements
are only as good as the
ability to maintain them”**

- A Park Spirit Board Member

**“No votes equals no
political action”**

- A Neighborhood Park
Representative

Park Spirit Moving Forward: Enhancement of Community Communication

Green Space Advocacy Open House



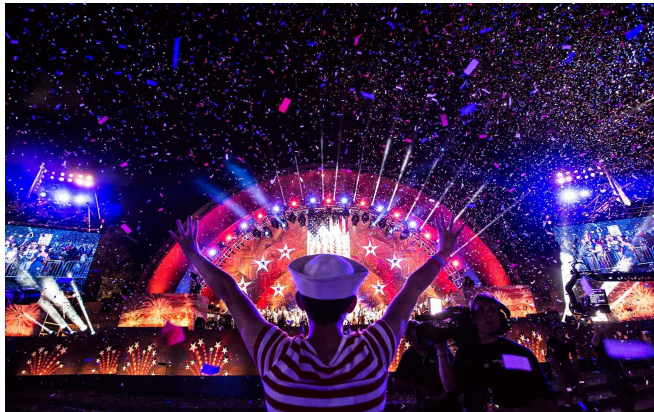
1. Help different groups understand each other's needs
2. Build a priority plan for park improvements
3. **Creates a cohesive communication format between green space organizations**

Park Spirit Moving Forward

Continue Improvements
to Park Programming



Dispersing of focus to
parks with little
representation



Organizational Shift Opens New Doors



References

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Acknowledgements

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