



Infrastructure Action Team Meeting #2

Parks & Open Space, Urban Forestry, Habitat Restoration

City Planning - Kara Smith, Sarah Yeager, Flore Marion, Marti Battistone, Terri Gladus

Green Building Alliance – Megan Zeigler

November 10, 2020

Tonight's Agenda

- Brief welcome, intro, and review of highlights from first meeting
- Review materials from Oakland Plan Existing Conditions Report
- Review Oakland 2025
- Review what we heard on EngagePGH
- Breakout Group Discussion: 20 MINS for Parks & Open Space
- Breakout Group Discussion: 20 MINS for Trees & Habitat
- Regroup and review
- Wrap up



Staff Team Introductions

DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

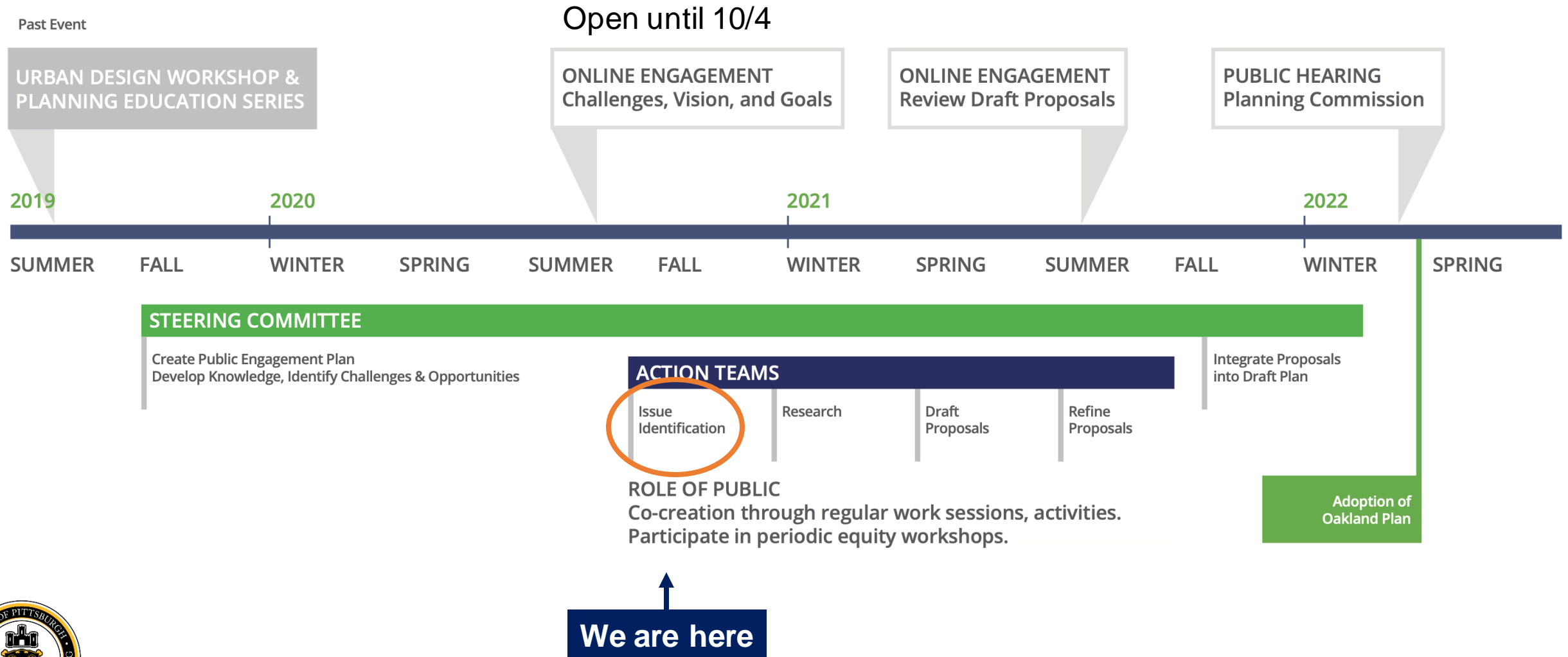
- Flore Marion – Energy Advisor
- Kara Smith – Environmental Planner
- Sarah Yeager – Climate and Energy Planner

GREEN BUILDING ALLIANCE

- Megan Zeigler, VP of Planning and Policy



Planning Process



Our Expectations for Your Behavior

Action Team members are expected to participate in good faith. The following rules of behavior apply to all members:

1. Prepare for and attend all meetings;
2. Participate fully and honestly, commenting constructively;
3. Treat fellow members with respect, particularly when there are differences of opinion;
4. Allow others to say what they believe is true without fear of reprisal;
5. Abide by the rule that only one person can talk at a time; and
6. Only represent your views when speaking with others about the planning process.

Those who routinely break these rules will no longer receive invites to meetings and will be removed from mailing lists.



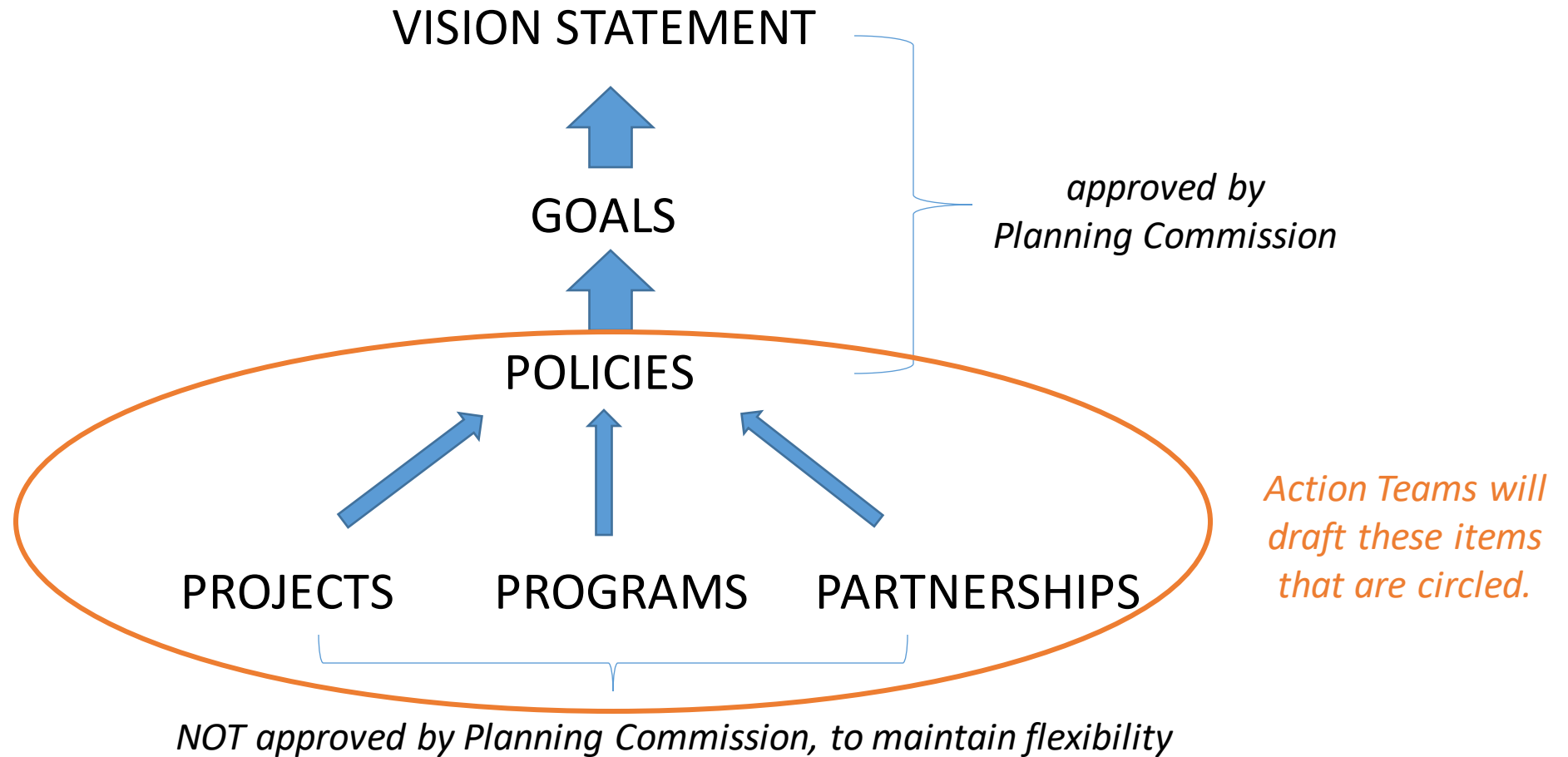
Role of the Action Teams

- Meeting regularly by Zoom to identify issues and opportunities, gather information, and develop proposals.
- Conducting engagements with the broader community (online for now) to inform our work and share our ideas.
- Developing draft proposals including what, who, and how.
- Presenting our ideas back to the Steering Committee to get their input and understand where two Action Teams should work together on a topic.
- Refine our proposals based on input from the general public and the Steering Committee. Create a table called an Implementation Matrix.



Neighborhood Plan Guide: <https://pittsburghpa.gov/dcp/neighborhood-planning-guide>

Plan Framework



Neighborhood Plan Guide: <https://pittsburghpa.gov/dcp/neighborhood-planning-guide>

Topics for the Infrastructure Action Team

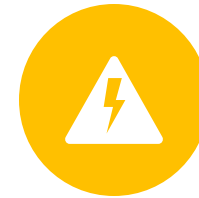
REQUIRED TOPICS:



Stormwater



Parks and Open Space



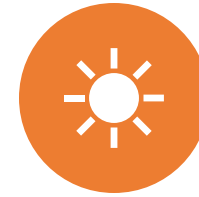
Energy and Utilities



Waste and Recycling



Tree Canopy and Habitat Restoration

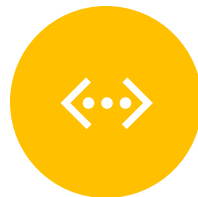


Climate Adaption

OPTIONAL TOPICS:



Urban Agriculture



Digital Network



Air Quality



Existing Conditions Report – Parks & Open Space

- Despite neighboring Schenley Park, Oakland overall is underserved for park and open space given its density, access constraints, and the suitability of existing park space to community needs.
- Despite improvements to access points to Schenley Park, including new bike lanes and the restoration of the Joncaire Steps, the steep topography of Junction Hollow and limited access points on Schenley Drive and Boulevard of the Allies means that only limited areas near these access points are within a 1/4 mile walk
- Pedestrian access to Schenley Plaza is excellent, but its location at the center of Oakland's cultural institutions means that it is outside of a 1/4 mile walk and easy access for most residents.



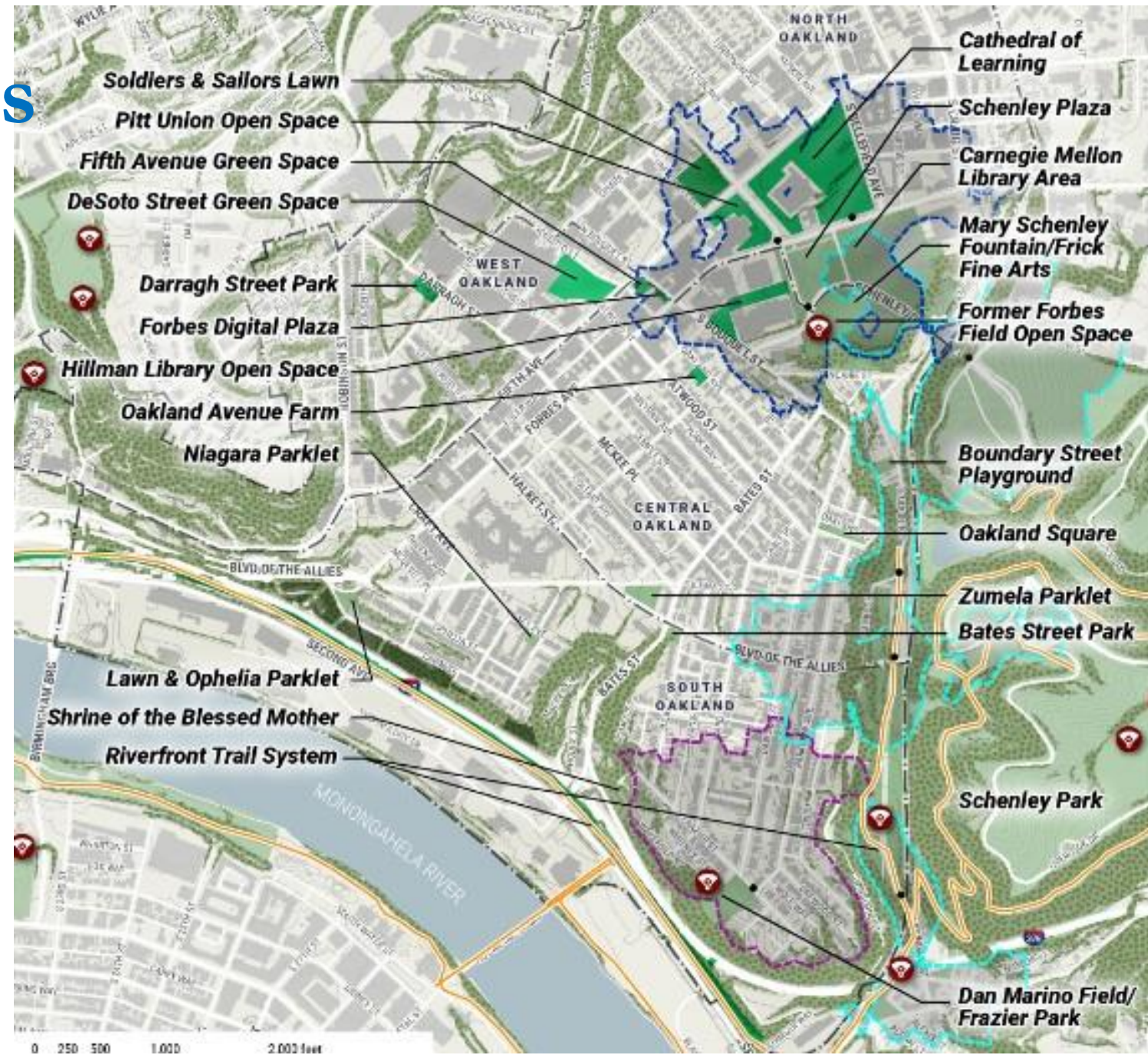
Existing Conditions Report – Parks & Open Space

Parks and Open Space

- Steep Slopes (25%+)
- Parks
- Greenways (Preserved Steep Slopes)
- Public Spaces
- Athletic Fields
- Ballfields
- Trails

1/4-MILE WALKING DISTANCE

- Park Access Points
- Frazier Playground
- Schenley Park
- Schenley Plaza



Existing Conditions Report – Parks & Open Space

- Frazier Park provides a neighborhood park and recreation space for most of South Oakland, but is located at the edge of the plateau and so has a smaller walking radius than it would otherwise.
- Many of the green spaces in Oakland are primarily grass lawns which often lack design elements and amenities that make spaces more usable for people, and also lack the kinds of plantings that provide greater environmental benefit and animal habitat.
- In addition to Schenley Park and Frazier Park, Oakland contains the following open space types:
 - Campus green or plazas
 - Smaller park spaces
 - Beautification Sites
 - Riverfront trail system
 - Greenways and hillsides
 - “Social distancing” spaces making use of temporarily closed roads



OpenSpacePGH: Recommendations for Parks in Oakland

Sector 14 - Oakland

Oakland is home to five neighborhood parks (4.6 ac.). Schenley Park forms the east boundary of the sector, and the University of Pittsburgh is located within this area. Oakland is a high density area with very little available land, though parks are needed.

Table G16: Project List for Neighborhood Parks Sector 14- Oakland

Neighborhood Park	Acres	Divest	Invest	Redevelop	Relocate	Expand	Naturalize
Central Oakland Neighborhood							
Boundary St. Park	0.5	•			•		•
South Oakland Neighborhood							
Frazier Park	3.4			•			
Lawn and Ophelia Park	0.4	•					•
Niagara Park	0.2		•				
West Oakland Neighborhood							
Dunseith Park (Shalane's Play Yard)	0.1		•				
Total	4.6						



Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy's Equitable Investment Strategy

Capital Project Investment Priority Rankings

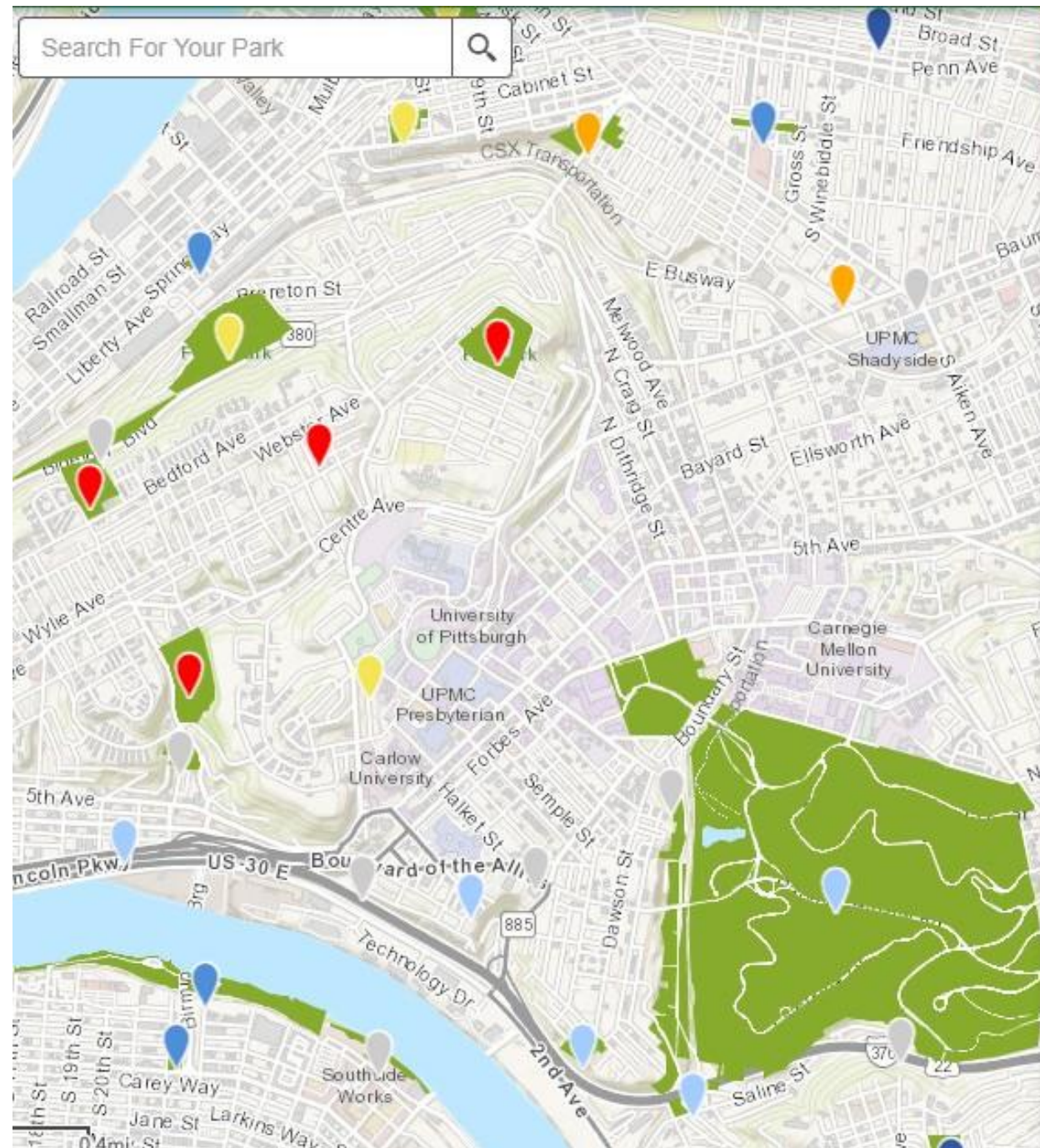
*Sites are ranked according to their Community Need Score and Site Need Score, and they will be funded for capital investment in rank order **

Niagara Park: 79/165

Schenley Park: 94/165

Frazier Park: 96/165

* A rank of 0 indicates that this site is not included in Capital Project rankings; however, these sites will still receive Rehabilitation funds.



The Data Behind the Rankings

- ☐ Youth
- ☐ People of Color
- ☐ Seniors
- ☐ Poverty
- ☐ Anxiety
- ☐ Obesity
- ☐ Diabetes
- ☐ Depression
- ☐ Asthma
- ☐ Black Carbon
- ☐ Violent Crime
- ☐ Vacancy
- ☐ Tree Canopy
- ☐ Water Management Priority Areas

Types of Open Space

Who can access the space? Who owns, maintains, and operates it?



Public Open Space

- Schenley Park
- Frazier Park
- Oakland Square

Privately-Owned Public Space

- Desoto Street green space (UPMC)
- Forbes Digital Plaza (UPitt / OBID)
- Cathedral of Learning area (UPitt)

Private Open Space

- Residential yards
- Institutional open space with limited public access

How "natural" is the space?



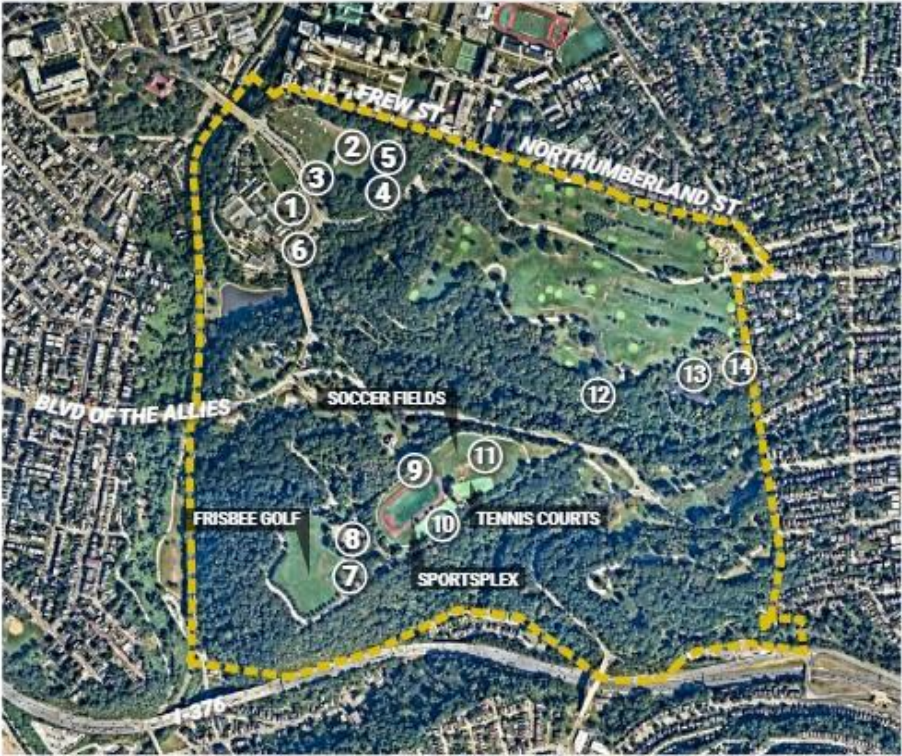
Permeable (rain can soak in)
Native / naturalized vegetation

Impervious (rain runs off)
Less vegetation, more paving

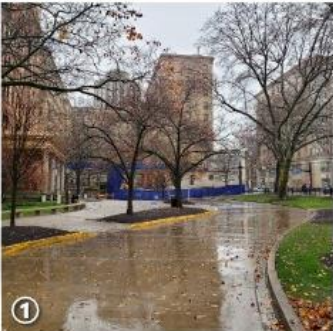
Who feels welcome and what is the space for?

Different user groups, races, ages, genders, classes, types of events and uses, animals & plants, seasons & conditions

Schenley Park



North-Central Oakland (N of Forbes)



Cathedral of Learning

Soldiers & Sailors

Pitt Union

North-Central Oakland (South of Forbes)



Carnegie Library



Maseroski / Former Forbes Field



Schenley Plaza



Mary Schenley Fountain / Frick Fine Arts

North-Central / West Oakland



Fifth Ave Green Space



DeSoto St Green Space



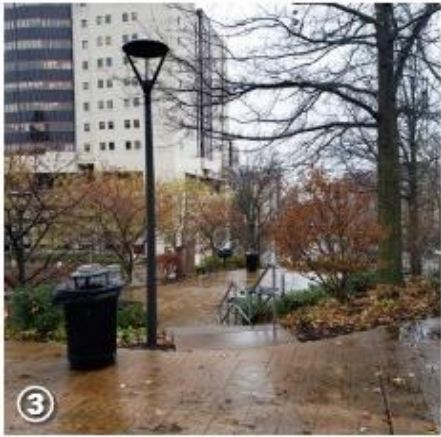
Forbes Digital Plaza



Hillman Library



Dunseith Park /
Shalane's Play Yard



Darragh St Park



Oakland Ave Farm

Central Oakland



Boundary St Playground



Bates Street Park



Oakland Square



Zulema Park

South Oakland



Lawn & Ophelia



Niagara Park



Shrine of the Blessed Mother



Frazier Park / Dan Marino Field

Not pictured but still important: Riverfront Trail System, Oakcliffe Greenway, Bigelow Greenway (N Oakland), other wooded slopes

Existing Conditions Report - Trees

- Tree canopy covers approximately 19% of Oakland.
- Only 23% of Oakland's tree canopy is in the core and neighborhood areas.
- The other 77% is found on steep slopes and at the edges of the neighborhoods. Trees making up hillside canopy tend to be invasive species and not high-quality canopy.
- Outside of Schenley Farms, Oakland's residential neighborhoods have negligible tree canopy compared to the adjacent neighborhoods.
- Tree canopy covers less than 5% of developed block, on average.
- Limited setbacks and smaller lot sizes mean there is less space for trees to grow on residential properties. The high demand for parking in the neighborhood results in lots being paved rather than planted with trees
- Due to low tree canopy and high impervious surface, Oakland is an urban heat island.
- Both City of Pittsburgh data and TreePittsburgh analysis indicate that Oakland is losing tree canopy overall.



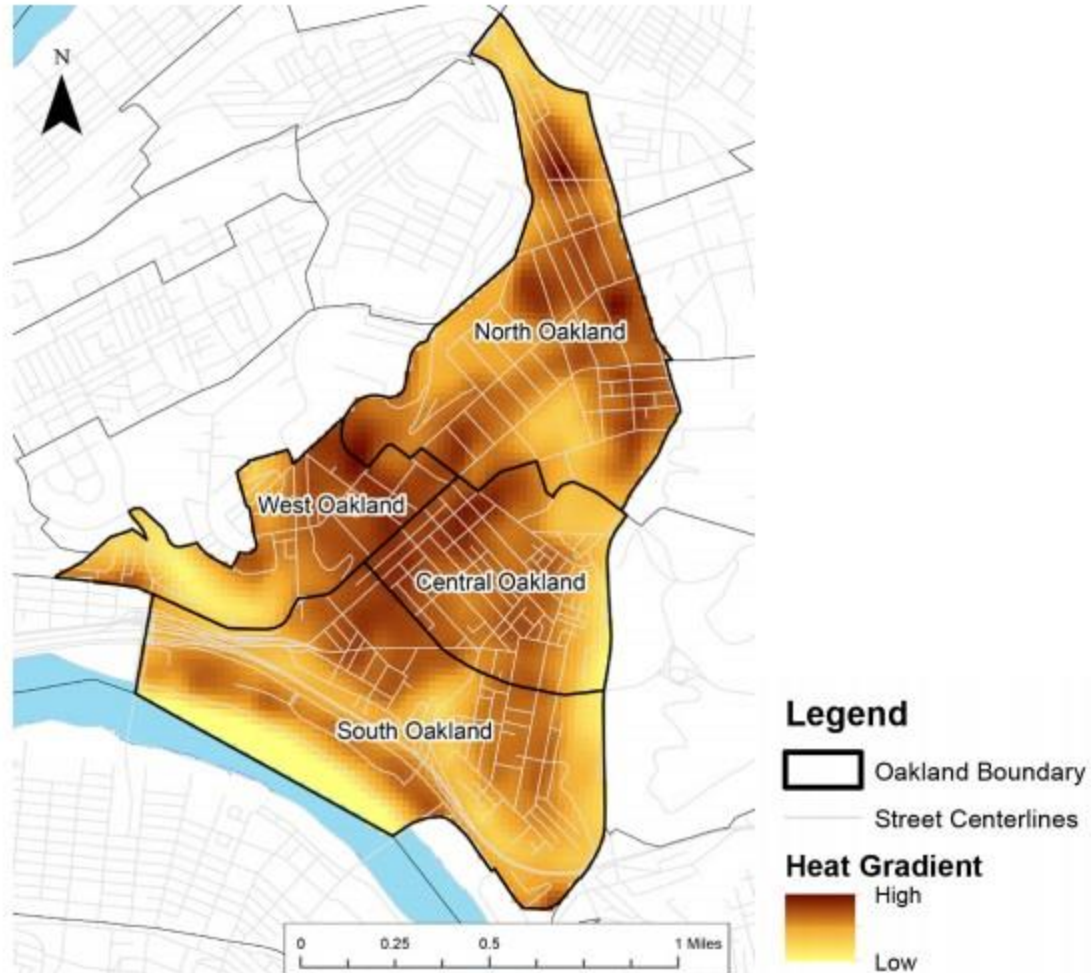
Existing Conditions Report - Trees

- Most of the tree canopy in Oakland's neighborhoods and core comes from trees in the public right-of-way, which are limited in how large they can grow by sight lines, utilities, and available space.
- There are approximately 1,500 trees in Oakland currently owned and maintained by the City right-of-way and public property. Approximately 8% are slated for removal due to death or disease.
- The City requires tree planting as part of zoning requirements for development. New street trees are required at a rate of one tree for every 30 feet of frontage. The City has minimum standards for tree pits (30 sq. ft., 3' by 10' as possible) as well as species recommendations.
- Major infrastructure projects such as BRT and Boulevard Betterment project include tree plantings.
- Oakland Planning and Development Corporation and community partners support tree planting and maintenance. OPDC has organized to fill empty tree pits across the neighborhood and support residents applying for TreeVitalize grants, which support planting of at least ten trees per block on private property. The TreePGH program offers training and assistance with maintenance.

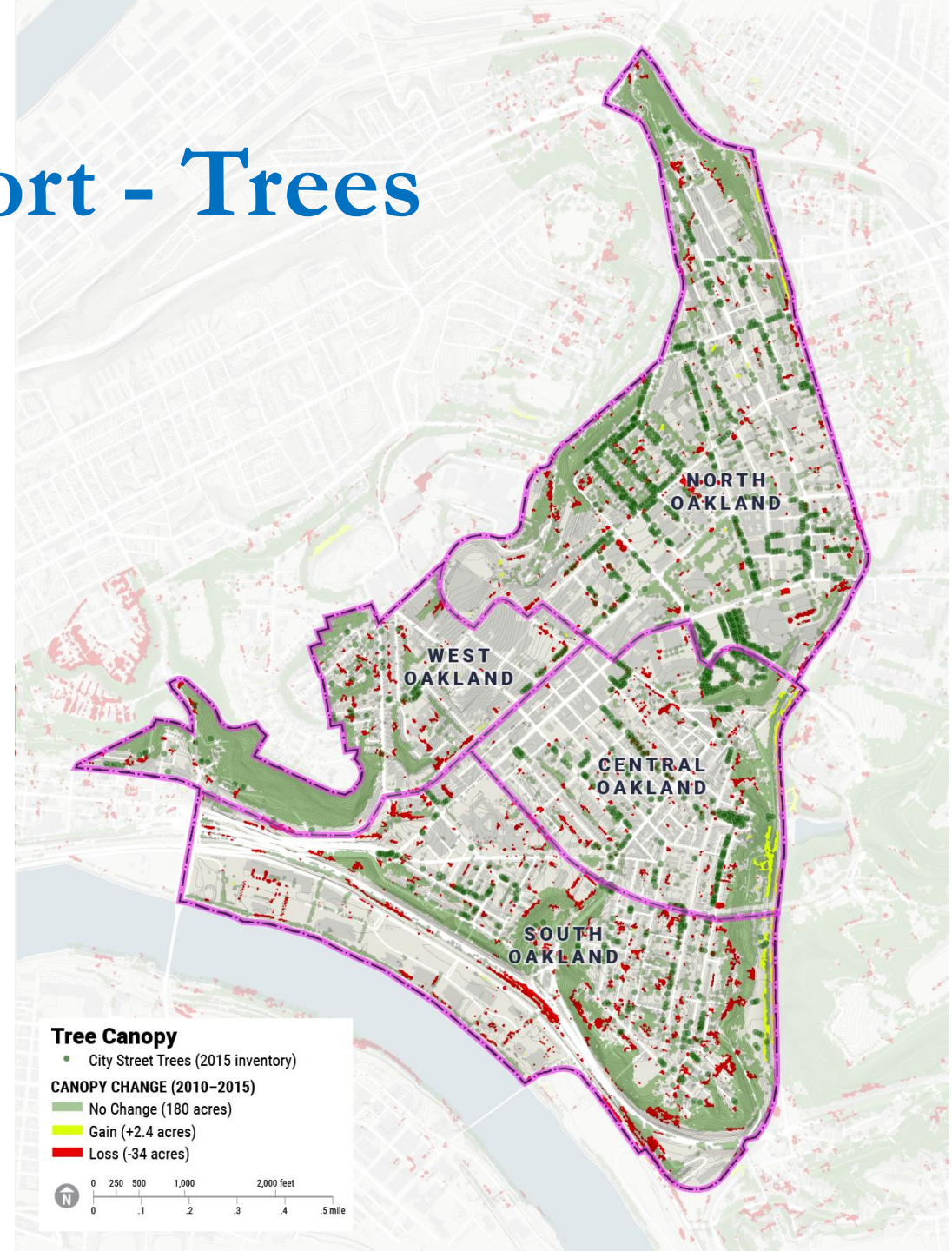


Existing Conditions Report - Trees

Oakland Temperature Map—September 2015

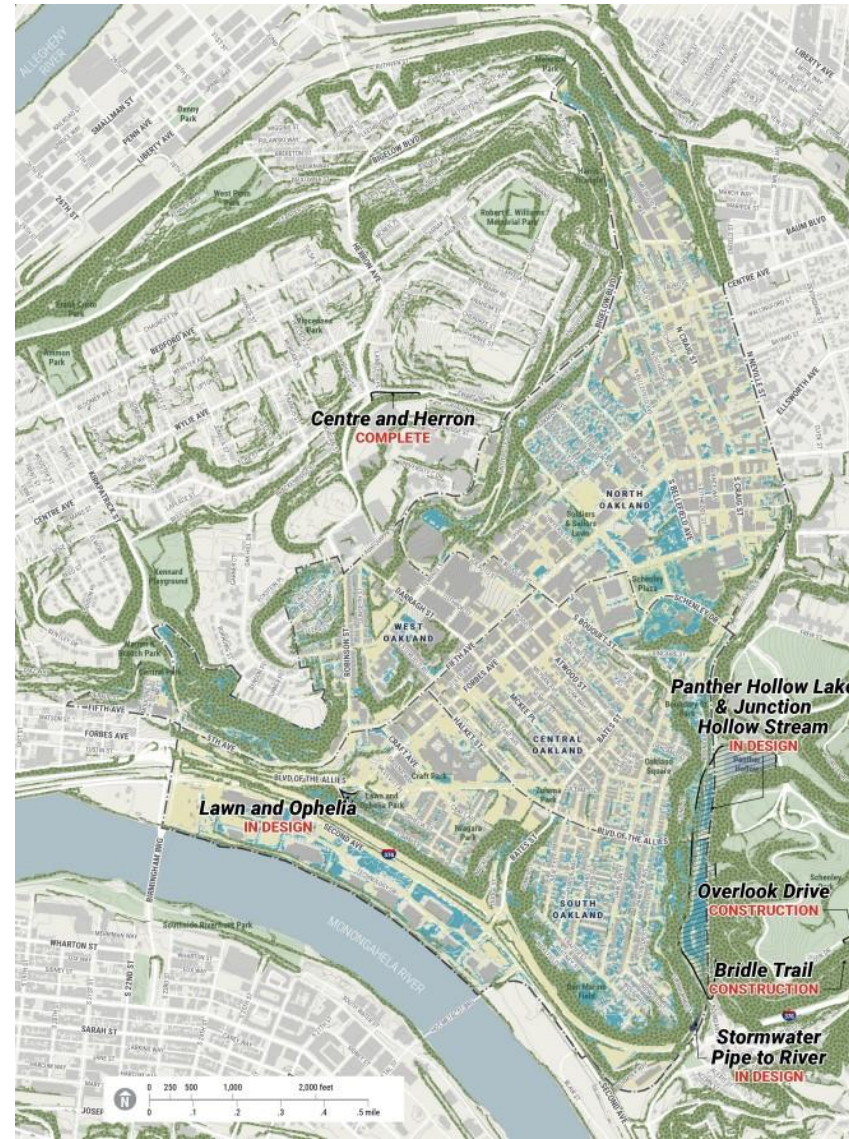


Source: Tree Pittsburgh



Existing Conditions Report - Habitat

- Doesn't say much explicitly about "habitat" but covers relevant topics:
- Tree canopy coverage and tree health
- Hillsides & invasive species
- Lawns & lack of biodiversity
- Impervious land cover
- Stormwater management
- Green stormwater infrastructure
- Parks & open space
- Urban heat island effect (hotter areas)



CHAPTER FOUR: URBAN DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Topography and Green Infrastructure Projects

- Steep Slopes (25%+)
- Green Infrastructure Project In Progress
- Pervious Area
- Impervious Area



Review of Oakland 2025 Plan

Oakland Neighborhoods

MOBILITY

- Transit: Fifth/Forbes BRT line
- Transit: BRT stations
- ⋯ Transit: consolidated shuttle loops (3)
- - - Transit: Downtown circulator loop
- Transit: mobility hubs
- Bicycles: proposed on-street markings or dedicated lanes
- Bicycles: proposed off-street trail
- - - Bicycles: existing on-street markings or dedicated lanes
- Bicycles: existing off-street trail
- ⋯ Bicycles: existing on-street route

HOUSING

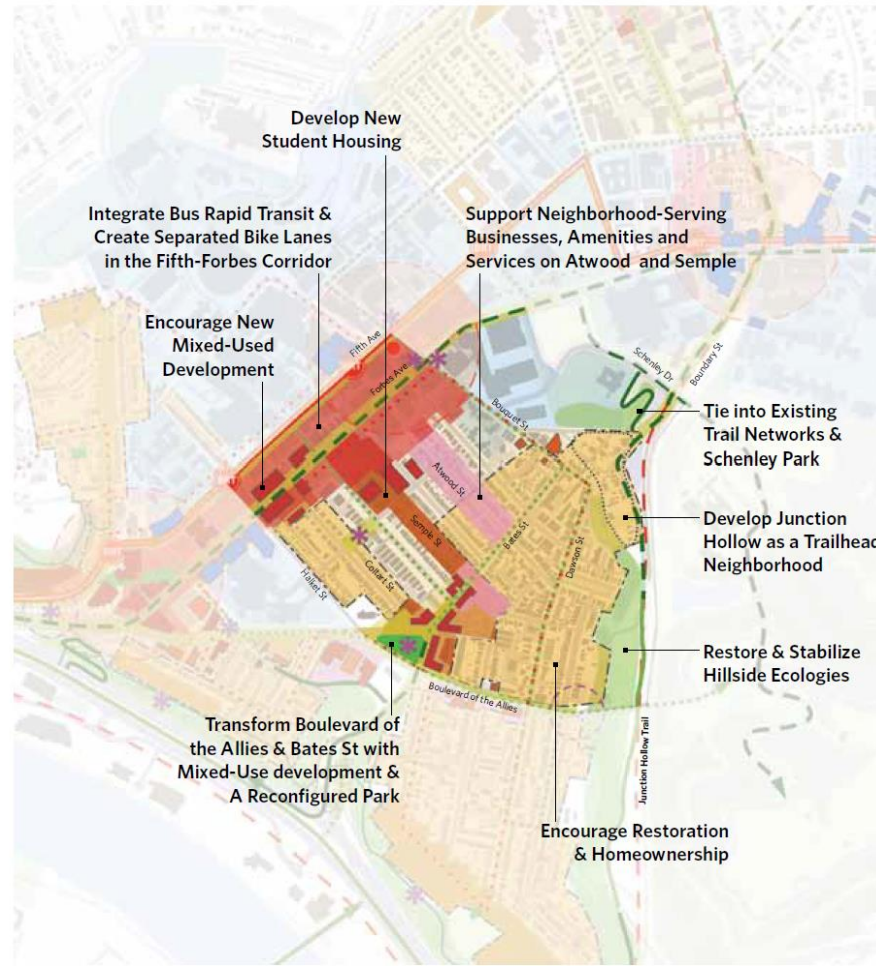
- Existing residential areas
- - - Homeowner preservation priority
- New market-rate housing development
- Corridors for apartments & student housing development

BUSINESS + DEVELOPMENT

- Oakland Business Improvement District
- Neighborhood business district
- Existing institutions
- Proposed mixed-use development
- Proposed building renovation
- Proposed institutional development

OPEN SPACE + ART

- Renovated and expanded parks
- Hillside restoration
- Streetscape improvements
- ⋯ Trailhead neighborhoods
- ✱ Public art
- Gateway beautification
- Walking trails



Central Oakland



Review of Oakland 2025 Plan

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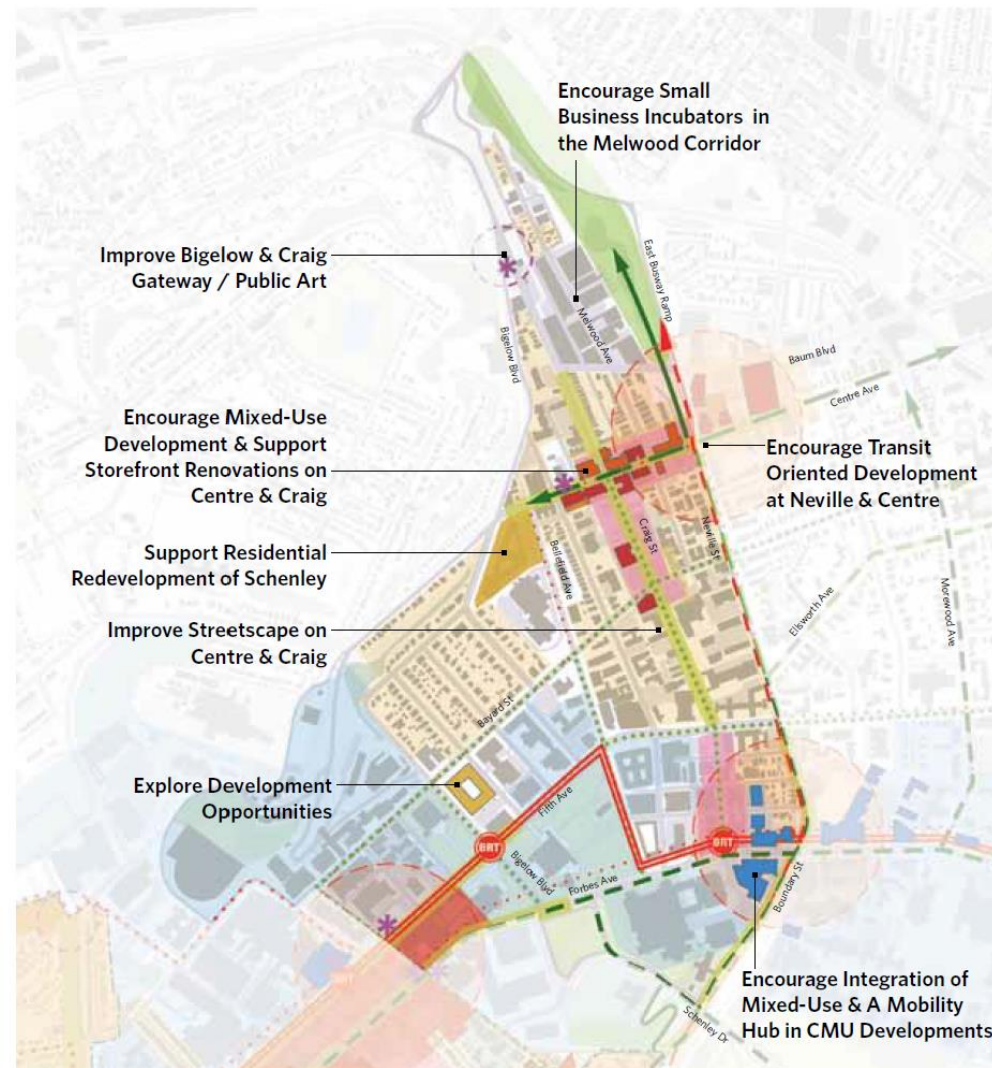
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North Oakland



Review of Oakland 2025 Plan

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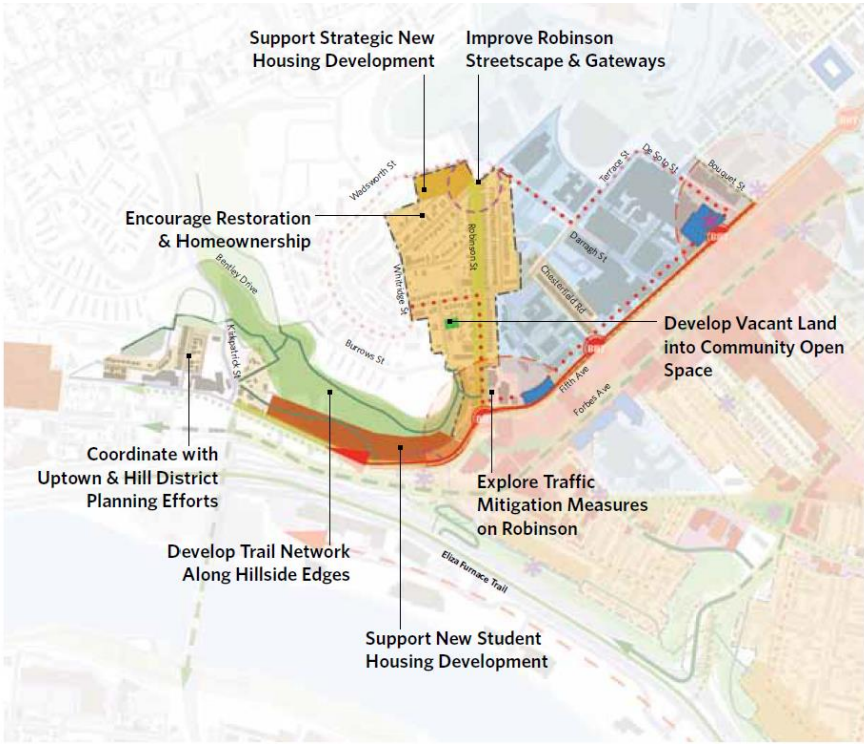
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OPEN SPACE + ART

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South Oakland



West Oakland



Review of Oakland 2025 Plan

Bates Street and the Boulevard of the Allies

One of the most challenging areas of Oakland's urban fabric and transportation systems is the Bates/Boulevard of the Allies intersection. Never designed for a major off ramp from I-376, Bates Street has continued to be a key problem in getting traffic in and out of the neighborhood. During the planning process, South and Central Oakland residents consistently identified a lack of pedestrian safety crossing the Boulevard as a major issue to address. Oakland 2025 explored a range of scenarios for reconfiguring the Bates/Boulevard intersection with the two preferred schemes shown at right. Both schemes expand Zulema Park, add planted medians to the Boulevard of the Allies and integrate sites for new mixed-use housing development along Bates.

Option 1, which could be considered the short-term solution, modifies Bates to be one-way into the neighborhood and makes minor modifications to Zulema and Coltart. Option 2 proposes a grade-separated solution with the Boulevard of the Allies on a bridge over Bates with slip ramps parallel to the boulevard connecting the two. This is complemented by a new roundabout at Zulema and Bates and planted medians on both streets. In any scenario, bicycle infrastructure on Bates and Zulema should be added, and pedestrian crossings at all of the intersections around the triangle should be improved. Safety improvements should be made to existing pedestrian crossings at Craft, Ward and Dawson in conjunction with the creation of a planted median on the Boulevard.



Grade-separated scenario for Bates and the Boulevard

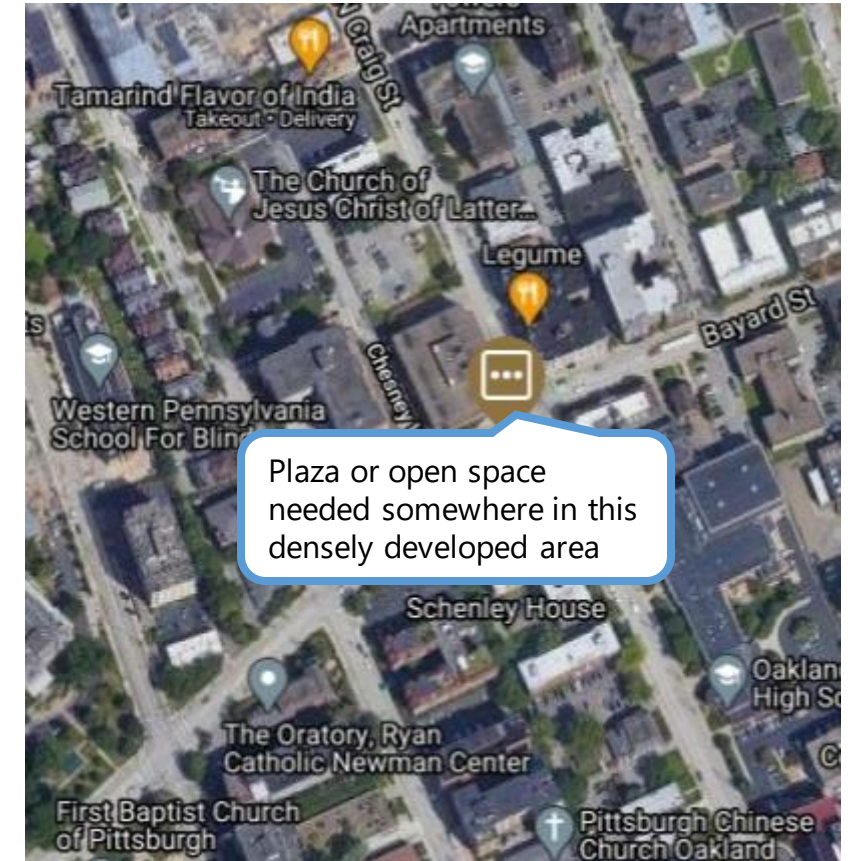


Option 1: Bates and the Boulevard: at-grade solution



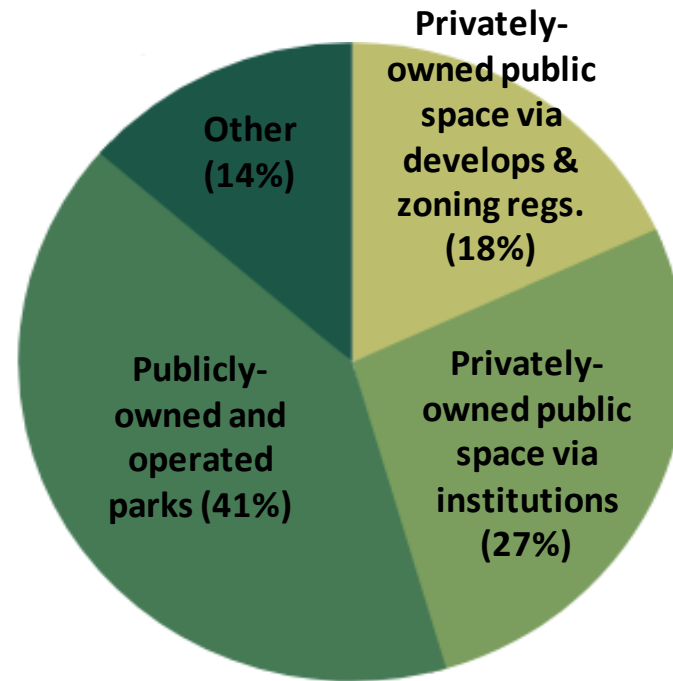
Option 2: Bates and the Boulevard: grade-separated solution

EngagePGH: Parks & Open Space

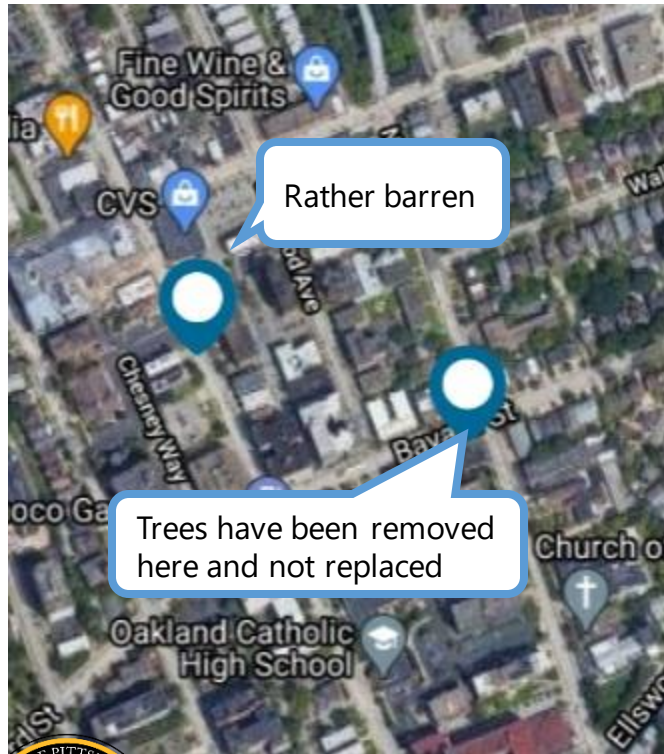


EngagePGH: Parks & Open Space

WHAT ARE THE BEST STRATEGIES FOR
CREATING NEW PARKS AND OPEN SPACE?

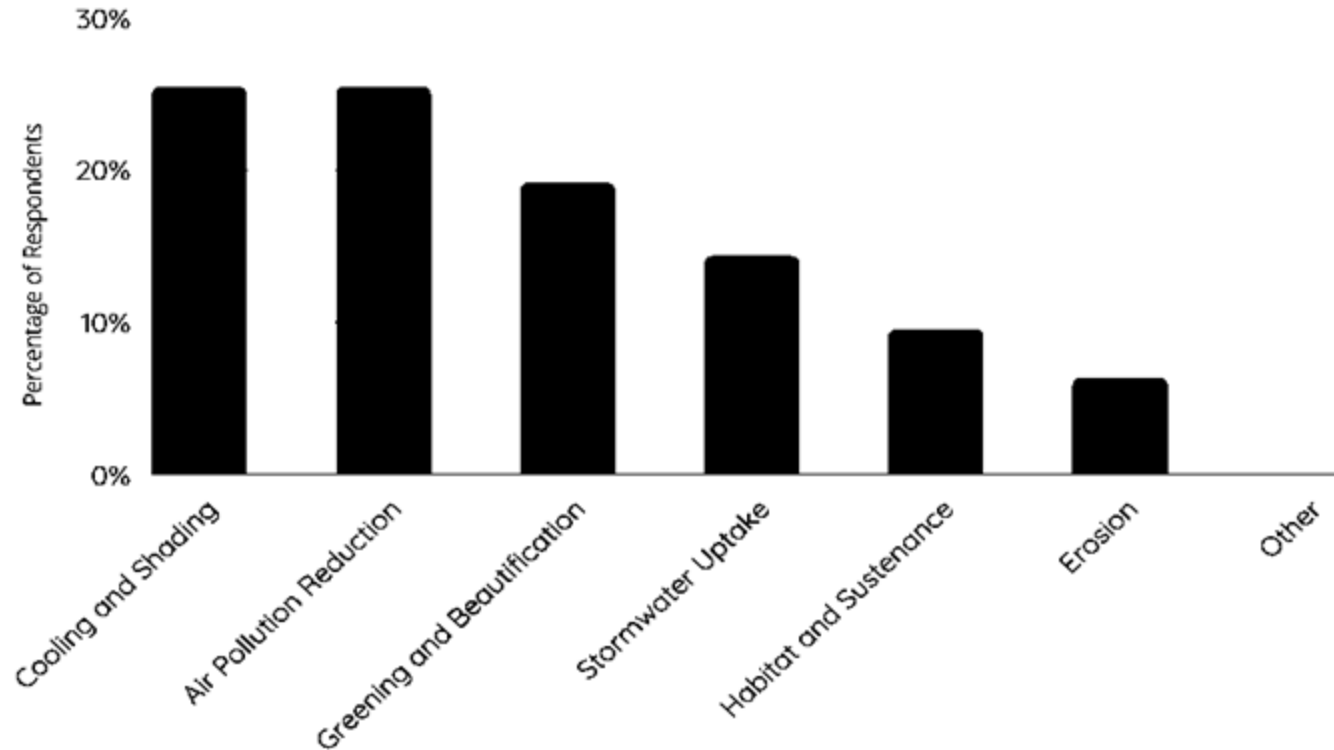


EngagePGH: Urban Forestry



EngagePGH: Urban Forestry

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS OF TREES IN OAKLAND?



EngagePGH: Habitat Restoration



This hillside is torn up and inaccessible due to construction. Habitat restoration will be needed afterward (perhaps is already in Pitt's plan)

Create a green roof and green facade program that businesses can apply to that would create pollinator habitat, reduce storm water runoff, and help with heat island impacts on roof tops

Restoring habitat in this location is strategic. This is because it is surrounded by many restaurants which would provide a beautiful view to people dining there.

Not a high priority to change unless it's land sliding, however this hillside is green but full of invasive species

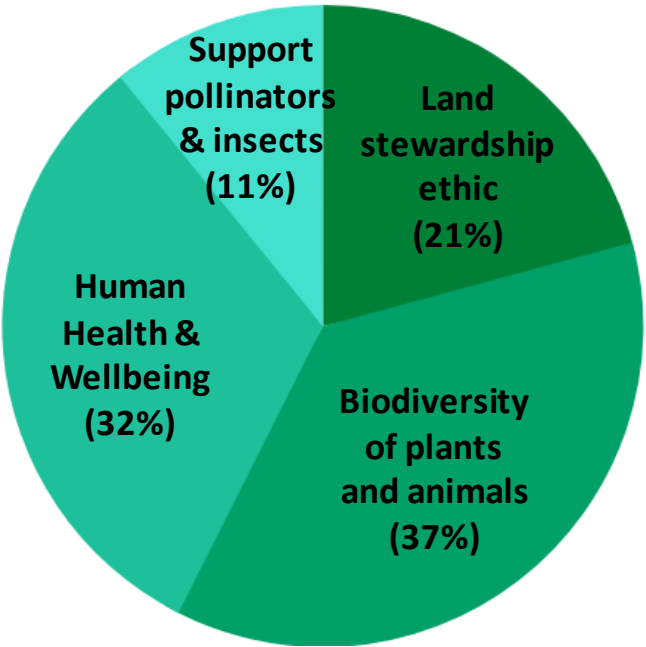
Already green space but could really be improved on! (Oakland Square)

Panther Hollow Lake and Run have a lot of opportunity for improvement.

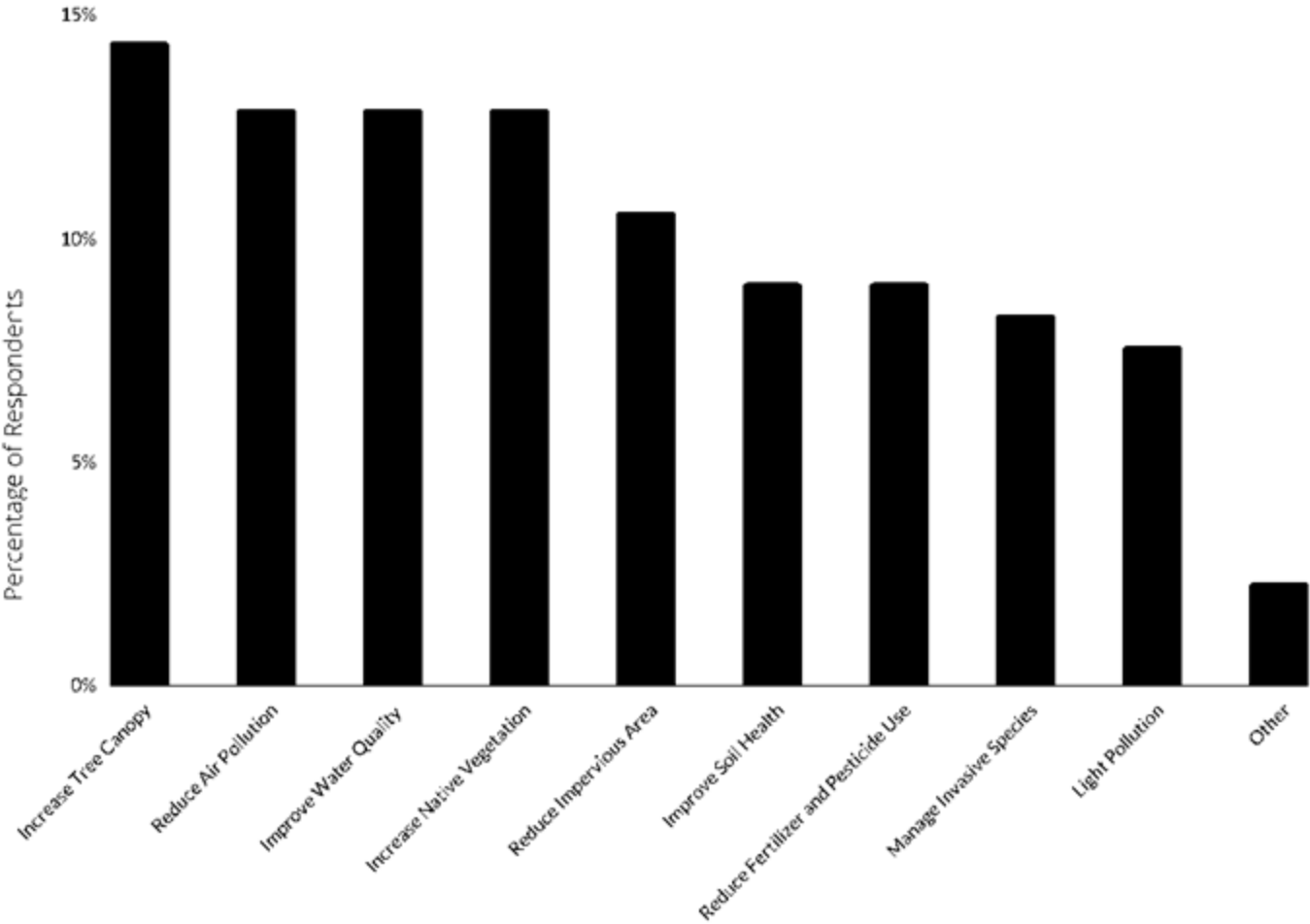


EngagePGH: Habitat Restoration

WHY IS HABITAT RESTORATION IMPORTANT?



WHAT METHODS OF HABITAT RESTORATION SHOULD WE FOCUS ON IN OAKLAND?



EngagePGH: Relevant Vision Statements

A Global Center For All: I envision more people focused outdoor spaces and cafe seating areas that thrive in all four seasons. More public art and creative and playful spaces. Small and large events for all seasons, international lighting art shows. Oakland will be a model community for accessibility showcasing new approaches to buildings and to urban design. Oakland has more lush green spaces. more trees and planted corridors...

Balanced Development: Between Centre and Forbes can be tall buildings 20 to 30 stories. Green spaces like the lawns of the Cathedral of Learning should separate the buildings and be sized in proportional to the buildings heights. Have you seen Tokyo?... Schenley plaza or a Pitt lawn should have a winter skating rink.

Green Infrastructure, Clean Neighborhoods: First and foremost, there needs to be better cooperation with the environment. This can be done in ways that benefits businesses, residents, and visitors, such as using solar panels, green infrastructure (like green roofs, rooftop greenhouses, etc.), more trees, and so on.

Green Space: I love Oakland and particularly enjoy all the green spaces around the Cathedral and various spots on Forbes where there are flower baskets. I think plantings could be enhanced greatly, tucking perennials and even trees in various spots.



EngagePGH: Relevant Vision Statements

A Neighborhood Where Diverse Groups Come Together to Work and Play: For families with kids, the museums are great. But what about a playground. Blue Slide park in Squirrel Hill attracts a very diverse group of families. All of the Oakland playgrounds are tucked away and hidden, available only to the neighboring residents and when you drive by they are essentially vacant. Or something that is both visually attractive and fun for kids like the Water Steps on the North shore. (2 Up Votes)

Oakland Needs a Lot of Help: ...POLLUTION! Something huge needs to be done here, I have NO CLUE how the EPA allows us to pump so many toxins into the air... Also, we need to plant more pretty trees and stuff around Pittsburgh because it's bland, dry, and ugly. If anyone goes to any other university they will find that it is so much more beautiful and nice. (2 Up Votes)

Oakland Takes a Green Page from International City Centers: University campuses that build community feature ample green spaces, places to congregate, places to walk, and an overall pleasant atmosphere. The campus part of Oakland is almost the opposite of this now, with wide roads, speeding traffic, and lots of exhaust...(3 Up Votes)

Creating a Community: ...Students have no investment in the city or the neighborhood and it looks it. We need trees and plantings and more places to sit along the way. The plaza has helped. It needs wall art, color-character. (3 Up Votes)



EngagePGH: Relevant Vision Statements

Initiative for Planting Native Species in Oakland Promotes Biodiversity: In much of landscaped America, plants like the boxwood shrub and Callery pear tree dominate the space. This is not the case in Oakland. After an ambitious decade-long project, Oakland's green spaces are now populated almost entirely by native plants. The project wasn't easy, but after decades of working with landscaping specialists and volunteers, ecology surveyors have found a substantial uptick in the number of resident species... (3 Up Votes)

More Trees: More trees please! I am fortunate to live on a rare street in south oakland which has trees, but some of them are getting cut down (!). This neighborhood is morbidly gray, it would be great to bring some life into it with trees. (9 Up Votes)

Make it Feel More like a Campus: ...Outdoor open areas give a much bigger feeling of community. Since the Covid restrictions have been in place, having a block of Oakland Avenue closed to traffic has been a wonderful addition for outside dining and simply as a gathering place. More small areas like this, places for outside dining, or even small parks, would greatly enhance the neighborhood... (10 Up Votes)



Breakout Group Discussion Directions

- Breakout Group Discussion: 20 MINS for Parks & Open Space
- Breakout Group Discussion: 20 MINS for Trees & Habitat
- Identify issues and opportunities
- What additional information is needed and how might we get it?
 - (e.g. surveys, tours, collect new data, best practices research, other engagement activities)
- Think about different areas: e.g. residential, business districts, institutions, etc.
- Think about equity among different races, groups of people, neighborhoods, etc.
- Remember this is only the first part of a conversation you will return to as you learn more about it and start to think about potential policies, projects, programs, and partnerships. It's fine to have more questions than answers at this point.



Review of Breakout Group Discussions

Let's hear the major points of discussion from each group:

- What were major issues & opportunities for parks & open space?
- What additional info / research should be gathered?
- What were major issues & opportunities for tree canopy & habitat restoration?
- What additional info / research should be gathered?



(Tentative) Next Steps

- December Meeting Topics:
 - Equity Training
 - Energy & Utilities
 - Climate Adaptation
 - Air Quality
- January Meeting Topics:
 - Goal Statements Review
 - Stormwater Management
 - Waste & Recycling
 - Wrap up this phase with any additional conversation before moving to research phase

