



# Evaluating Urban Park & Greenway Open Spaces

## URPL Fall Workshop

Josh Donaldson | Joe Klosterman | Rosa Kozub | Shang-Ching Kuei | Adam Smith

December 15, 2010

# Background

- Traditional focus on rural areas
  - Fishing, boating, ATV, camping
- Urban parks & greenways play stronger roles in planning and analysis of this SCORP
  - These facilities increase urban recreation
- Task: define a vision for Wisconsin's urban park systems that will improve the health of its residents



# Problem definition

Goal: to increase usage of urban parks and greenways

- Identify **OPPORTUNITIES** for increased usage
- Identify **BARRIERS** to increased usage
- Opportunities and barriers defined in terms of:
  - Design and aesthetics (visual appeal and maintenance)
  - Location and accessibility
  - Safety
  - Facility types and events offered

# Definitions

- Urban municipality definition:
  - 24 WI counties have over 50% population in urban areas
  - Municipalities with over 1000 people—163 municipalities in total
  - Four peer groups determined for these municipalities
  - Milwaukee and Madison are not included in the peer groups
  
- Park and greenway open space definition:
  - Facilities owned by local governments including standard park classification
  - Other facilities including golf courses, arboreta, pools, and skate parks
  - School properties, private facilities, indoor facilities excluded

# Quantitative methods and data

- Minimum requirement (MR)
  - Measures supply of facilities at a municipal level
  - Peer groups are used to compare the supplies of similar municipalities
- Budget analysis (park budget/total budget)
  - Measures a city's investment in park and greenway open spaces
  - Suggests the quality of facilities that each community is funding
- Citizen access (spatial analysis)
  - Conducted a spatial analysis of the locations of recreation facilities
  - Helps identify share of citizens with access (1/4 mile) to facilities
- Comparative and budget analyses conducted for Milwaukee and Madison
  - Compared to their specific peer groups of cities from across the country

# Qualitative methods and data

- Focus groups
  - Conducted emerging trends focus group
    - Comprised of representatives and participants of emerging outdoor recreation activities in the State:
    - Community gardening, bike polo, dog parks, ultimate frisbee, frisbee golf, and pond hockey
  - Recommendation: another study engaging specific age, ethnic/race, income, and user groups
    - Goal: understand how different segments use their recreation facilities, what their needs are for the future, and how barriers affect their usage
  
- Interview with experts in urban public health and park challenges

# Findings: Facility provision

- Urban municipality averages (per 1 000 pop):
  - 1.47 parks
  - 19.57 park acres
  - 0.87 non-school playgrounds
  - .33 miles of bicycle trails
  - .50 miles of hiking trails
  
- Top municipality in each peer group (acreage/1 000 pop):
  - Janesville: 39
  - West Bend: 44
  - Middleton: 64
  - Lannon: 115



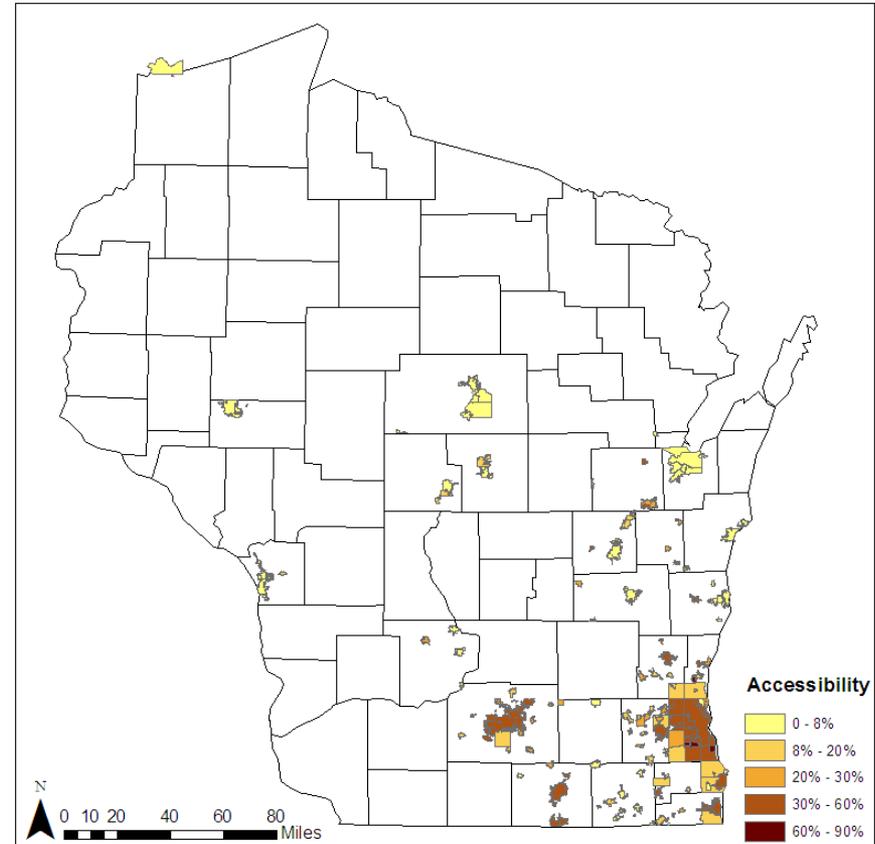
# Findings: Budgetary effort

- Urban municipality average (share of 2008 budget spent on parks):
  - 6.75%
  
- Top 5 in budgetary effort:
  - New Holstein (32%)
  - Holmen (31%)
  - Slinger (24%)
  - Lake Delton (23%)
  - Shorewood Hills (20%)



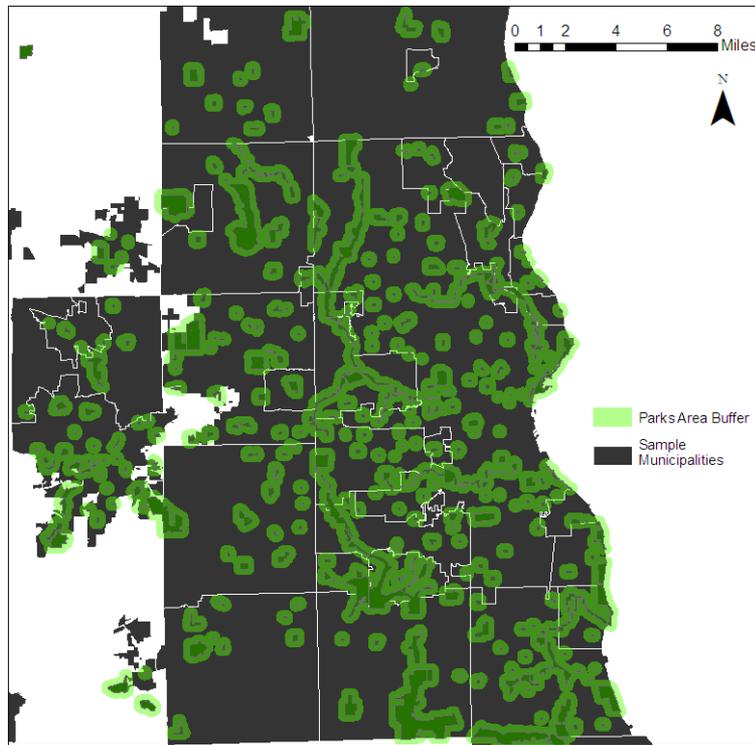
# Findings: Citizen access

- Urban municipality average (% of pop within a 1/4 mile from facility):
  - 35.68%
- Top 5 in citizen access:
  - Greendale (85%)
  - Middleton (84%)
  - Cedarburg (81%)
  - Madison (76%)
  - Verona (73%)

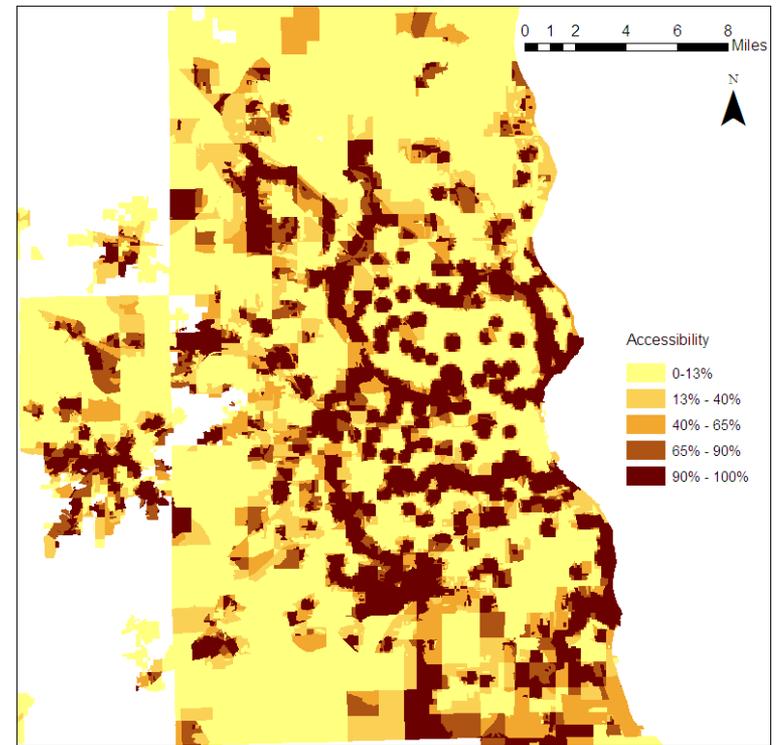


# Example: Milwaukee area

## Parks shown with 1/4 mile buffers



## Park access rates by census block



# Findings: Madison

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## □ Madison

- Madison placed above the median in the peer group of Boise ID, Des Moines IA, Lincoln NE, and Durham NC
- Madison exceeded in providing number and size of all park types, arboreta, and golf courses
- Madison underperformed in skate parks, miles of trails, pools, nature center, and land conserved

# Findings: Milwaukee

## □ Milwaukee

- Milwaukee placed above the median in the peer group of Kansas City MO, Columbus OH, Louisville KY, and Nashville TN
- Milwaukee excelled in trail miles and golf courses, providing almost twice level of the others in the peer group
- Milwaukee under performed in conservancy land and in terms of recommended size of mini parks

# Findings: Barriers to outdoor recreation in urban areas

- ❑ Safety: crime and traffic
- ❑ Lack of designated facilities
- ❑ Lack of park amenities
- ❑ Poor design
- ❑ Lack of organized programming
- ❑ Blighted facilities
- ❑ Lack of connectivity between parks or from neighborhoods
- ❑ Competition between neighborhoods for funding



# Findings: Opportunities to increase urban use

- Increase safety
- Versatility
- Provide basic amenities
- Design visually inviting places
- Develop organized programming
- More connections between parks and open spaces



# Findings: Funding

- Invest strategically
  - Context of shrinking park budgets
  - Creativity, new sources of funding
- Develop partnerships
  - Leverage others' skills, time, and resources
  - Recognize cobenefits



# Policy Impacts & Implementation

## Policy Impacts

- Acquisition / development prioritization
- Access and safety
- Organizational structure
- Funding

## Strategies

- Connectivity
- Improving small parks
- Conservation
- Programming
- Versatile facilities and standard amenities
- Partnerships
  - Public-Public
  - Public-Private





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Questions?

