City of Arvada Park Equity and Climate Resilience Assessment

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Background

Equity in city park systems is a nascent field, with burgeoning research showing many cities historically distributed their park resources, such as acreage and amenities, in inequitable ways. Regarding resilience, most cities do not have resilience plans despite worsening climatic variables, and even fewer cities consider how their parks are vulnerable to such climatic variables. Furthermore, virtually no research explicitly explores the intersection between park equity and park resilience.

Memorial Park. Photo provided by Sean Star.

Purpose

The City of Arvada's Vibrant Communities and Neighborhood's (VCN) department brought on a small group from CU Boulder's Masters of the Environment program to conduct their first "park equity and climate resilience assessment." The city aimed to understand how to best measure and improve the city's park infrastructure with a particular focus on these key variables. Ultimately, the city will use this assessment to provide more equitable, resilient park services to its residents.

Kids in Splash Pad. Photo provided by Sean Star.

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Process

Phase 1
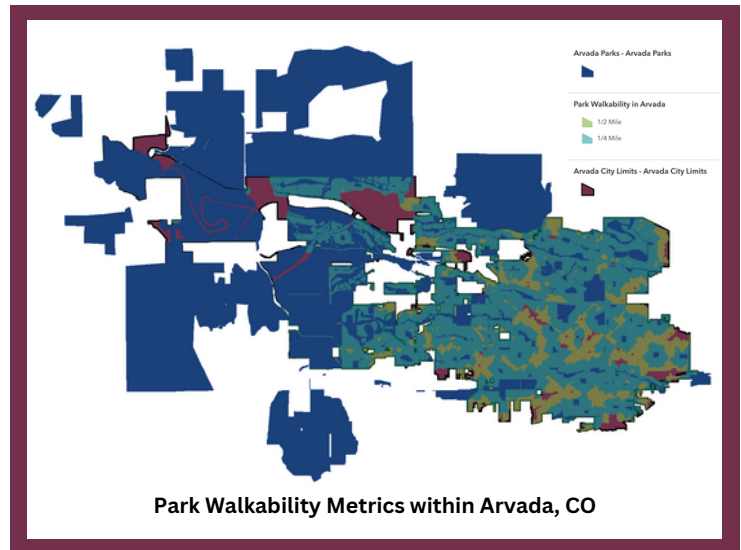Literature
Review

Phase 2
Geospatial
Gap Analysis

Phase 3
ArcGIS
StoryMap

Phase 1

The team conducted a comprehensive literature review, parsing through 127 unique resources such as cities' strategic master plans and parks plans, academic research, and non-profit white papers. Through this research, the team better grasped the equity and resilience landscapes, giving them an appropriate foothold moving forward. Ultimately, the team delivered a concise, 40-page literature review filled with resources to the City of Arvada.

Phase 2

The team narrowed the scope of its research, focusing exclusively on Arvada, auditing its park system for inequities, combing through Jefferson County's hazard management and water plans, and interviewing regional experts. Ultimately, the team identified existing gaps and issues requiring further research and created relevant maps in ArcGIS to elucidate their findings.

Park Walkability Metrics within Arvada, CO

Jefferson County Open Space GIS Team. (2022). Jefferson County Trails Plan Network Dataset. Golden, Colorado. Retrieved August 15, 2023. https://ucboulder.maps.arcgis.com/apps/mapviewer/index.html?webmap=0d871ba692d040d7b586c9e6cfb23a60

Phase 3

The team produced a StoryMap detailing its findings and presented it to various leadership teams within Arvada, such as the Sustainability Advisory Committee, The Parks Advisory Committee, and department heads such as legal, finance, HR, public works, and more. The team also presented to the newly-elected city council, thus providing vital information to this new cohort in order to ensure quality parks remain a top priority for the city.

Outcomes

The team's work is highly nascent in the City of Arvada. These first steps are meant to provide a solid foundation for further investment and work. By identifying existing inequities and data gaps and presenting these findings to leadership across the city government, the team created an impetus for further action by the Vibrant Communities and Neighborhoods department and throughout Arvada and future strategic plans.

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