

10.7 Improve Outdoor Access for All

10 – 40 Points

Action Updates

This action is available for the **current certification cycle** and was newly added in 2024.

Objective

Improve outdoor access for all residents.

What to Do

1. Through a process of community engagement, perform an on-site assessment of the current accessibility of an open space area in your municipality, and identify possible accessibility or other improvements (see list below in Action 10.7.2 for examples of possible improvements) for the open space area. Your community engagement process should include participants who represent a diverse representation of town residents, including residents with various mobilities, races, ethnicities, and ages. Ideally, municipal leadership and/or staff would participate as well. Visit your identified open space with your group of participants and assess conditions, amenities, and potential opportunities for improvement. **(10 points)**

Submit: A completed [worksheet 1](#). If your open space assessment was conducted more than three years ago, include a brief description of how it is still relevant and used by your municipality.

2. Improve an open space parcel in your municipality (i.e., improving access, improving habitat, etc.). Improvements must be outside of routine maintenance. Any invasive species management or mitigation work should be submitted under Sustainable CT Action 3.10 [Facilitate Invasive Species Education and Management](#). Improvements must have been made in the last three years to be eligible for points. **(15 points per improvement, up to 30 points)**

Note: Multiple instances of the same improvement in the same open space parcel (such as installing two new benches at the same park) are eligible for only 15 points. Making two different improvements in the same open space parcel can earn 30 points, as can making the same improvement in two different open space parcels.

Examples of improvements include, but are not limited to:

- Post park signage and maps available in multiple languages (that are spoken by the surrounding community)
- Trail improvements and/or new trail creation
- Repair and/or adding sidewalks leading to open space and parks
- Habitat improvements
- Add amenities that are compatible for multiple, diverse users
- Add features such as accessible restrooms, water fountains, seating, or shade structures
- Make improvements in response to community input

Submit: A brief description of the open space improvement, the parcel where the improvement(s) was made, date it was completed, and relevant documentation, such as a purchase order for new seating.

Engaging Partners

Sustainable CT encourages regional collaboration and other forms of partnership. For every action, please complete the "Partners" box in your submission, indicating the name(s) of any municipalities and/or organizations you partnered with (if any) and a brief description of your municipality's role. If you collaborate with other municipalities, each community will receive points. For additional information, please see the "[Partners Guidance Document](#)".

Potential Municipal and Community Collaborators

Potential partners include municipal parks and recreation staff, public works staff, and relevant commissions (such as Inland Wetlands Commissions or Conservation Commissions); local land trusts; local community organizations focused on disability services and accessibility, nature and the outdoors, and other relevant topics.

Funding

If available, below are potential funding sources specific to this Action. For a complete listing of potential funding opportunities to assist with implementing Sustainable CT Actions, please visit the [Sustainable CT Grants Portal](#), which is searchable by Action. Please also visit the [Support for Your Town](#) page for opportunities for technical assistance and other supports.

- [CT Recreational Trails Grant Program](#)
- [The Land and Water Conservation Fund: Outdoor Recreation and Legacy Partnership Program](#)
- [Urban Forest Equity Grant Program](#)

Resources

Toolkits, Calculators, Guidance Documents, General Information

- CT DEEP, [Benefits of Trails and Greenways](#)
- CT DEEP, [Outdoor Recreation](#)
- Trust for Public Land, [ParkServe](#): Trust for Public Land reports that over 100 million people lack access to a park within a ten-minute walk from home. TPL's ParkServe tool provides comprehensive data on the park systems and open spaces for cities and municipalities throughout the United States. ParkServe highlights park investments and needs within a given city or municipality.
- Trust for Public Land, [Nature Near Schools](#): This interactive map depicts the existing open spaces, parks, and natural resources that are available to K-12 schools across the state of Connecticut, allowing users to identify opportunities to create or enhance access to open spaces for individual schools and the public. The Nature Near Schools map highlights schools within a half mile of public open spaces.
 - NOTE – State open space data continues to grow, thanks to the input of municipalities like yours. Please help to improve the accuracy of Nature Near Schools by submitting the latest data in your area here, through Trust for Public Land's [ParkServe database](#)
- US Forest Service, [Accessibility Resources](#)
- US Forest Service, ["The wellness benefits of the great outdoors"](#)
- Connecticut Trails (UConn College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources), [Connecticut Trail Census](#)
- CT DEEP, [GIS Open Data Website](#)

Organizations and Relevant Programs

- [Connecticut Land Conservation Council](#)
- [Trust for Public Land](#)
- UConn College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources, [Connecticut Trails](#)
- CT DEEP, [Passport to the Parks](#)
- CT DEEP, [No Child Left Inside](#)

Why This Matters

Given the benefits of access to the outdoors, ensuring residents have access to community open space is critical for equity and community building.

Benefits

Access to the outdoors and open space can provide both mental and physical health benefits for residents. Easily accessible open space can also serve as a space for community gathering and connection.

CT Success Stories