Public parks are considered cultural, political, and economic assets, essential to the social life and public health of cities. There is widespread empirical evidence that public parks and green spaces provide benefits to adjacent neighborhoods in terms of economic value, environmental benefit, physical and mental health, and social connection. These benefits of parks and green spaces can be utilized only when parks are accessible to residents, are inclusive, and meet the needs of the community. Studies also have shown inequities and exclusions in the distribution of parks and green spaces. Low-income households and people of color in urban areas tend to have less access to well-maintained and highly utilized parks and green spaces.

This project aims to redress the problem of park and green space inequity. The goal of this chapter is to 1) gain an in-depth understanding of variables associated with public space access in terms of morphological and social dimensions, and 2) evaluate the existing park and green space context based on three normative principles of park equity – proximity, diversity, and social need – that emphasize the significance of contextual and inclusive approaches to public space planning.

Funders: Grant-in-Aid fund, University of Minnesota.
Fig. 1. Lewis Park and ¼ mile buffer area as an example of Cluster 1.

Fig. 2. Owasso Ballfield and ¼ mile buffer area as an example of Cluster 2.
Fig. 3. Vermont Park and ¼ mile buffer area as an example of Cluster 3.
Fig. 4. Mears Park and ¼ mile buffer area as an example of Cluster 4.
Fig. 5. Walhof Park and ¼ mile buffer area as an example of Cluster 5.