The Trust for Public Land in Action: 2020
CELEBRATING WHAT YOU MADE POSSIBLE IN TENNESSEE AND BEYOND
South Chattanooga Parks for People

CURRENT PROJECTS

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Thank you so much for partnering with us in Tennessee!

At the end of 2019, I joined dozens of our long-time supporters to celebrate The Trust for Public Land’s 25-year legacy of connecting Chattanoogans to nature and each other. Volunteers, donors, and city partners shared stories of our immense impact on the city we know and love. The celebration culminated in several donors stepping up to donate the final funding needed to complete the last mile of the South Chickamauga Creek Greenway. It was a consequential and hopeful moment.

We had no idea how different the world would be in just a few short months.

The coronavirus pandemic and its economic fallout have created unprecedented hardships for everyone and the ongoing realities of systemic racism have shined a light on the urgency of our work.

We know that great parks and green spaces can transform communities from the ground up: they improve public health, advance economic opportunities and learning outcomes, and connect people to nature and to each other. We see first-hand how well-designed parks are more than a place to play; they change people’s lives.

Our new strategic plan places community at the center of our powerful land-for-people work. The impact of our mission is not only the creation of great parks, public lands, trails, and green schoolyards; it’s also the strengthening of the social and civic, personal and emotional connections upon which our communities depend while addressing the most pressing problems in climate, health, and equity across the country.

We are rising to the challenges of this unprecedented moment by bringing parks and green spaces to where they’re needed most. In Nashville, we are ensuring parks and conservation are primary strategies in the forthcoming Climate Action Plan — especially in the urban neighborhoods most at risk of adverse climate impacts — by serving on the Mayor’s Sustainability Advisory Committee.

In Chattanooga, we continue to focus on connecting communities through trails like the South Chickamauga Creek Greenway, the Stringer’s Ridge extension into Red Bank, and the Alton Park Connector to link one of the city’s most isolated neighborhoods to the 25-mile greenway system. We have also analyzed the entire city to identify the top ten areas for new parks that could impact the most people. And we began working with our city partners on a plan to bring some of these parks to life.

The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated the value parks bring to people. Parks are more important than ever, and with your help, we can deliver quality green spaces to the communities that need them the most.

Thank you!

Jenny Park
Tennessee State Director

Thank you so much for partnering with us in Tennessee!

John Dooley
Southside Community Park
Chattanooga, TN
Building the final mile for South Chickamauga Creek Greenway

Trails are where people mix and mingle—where joggers and cyclists share the route with dog walkers and kids on scooters and families with strollers. Plants and wildlife flourish along these corridors. That’s why we’re so thankful for your help completing our $6.2 million two-phase fundraising campaign for the South Chickamauga Creek Greenway. This bold vision for 25 miles of urban trails connecting Chattanoogans to nature and each other is realized thanks to the generosity of over 150 donors!

Now, we’re even closer to completing the broader vision of 100 miles connecting the Tennessee Riverwalk to Lookout Mountain and beyond.

Construction on the last mile of the greenway will connect the 275-acre Camp Jordan to the Tennessee Riverwalk. The greenway will not only connect communities to downtown, it will also serve as a new linear park within walking distance of over 30,000 people—providing easy access to outdoor recreation, social connections, and health and healing.

We broke ground on the final mile in December 2019 with Nature Bridges—a company specializing in constructing timber bridges and pedestrian boardwalks in environmentally sensitive areas. We’ve already built over 1,400 linear feet of boardwalk through the beautiful natural area between Cromwell Hills and the creek. Construction will continue through November 2020.

The City of Chattanooga is simultaneously finalizing their last two miles of the trail. The multi-use path portion along Shallowford Road and the Brainerd Levee trailhead improvements are nearly complete. The Caine Lane and Youngstown sections experienced delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic but are expected to be finished in spring 2021.

Upon completion—and dependent on the coronavirus-related health precautions at the time—we plan to host a bike/run event with the city so the community can celebrate their new trail together. Sponsors have already contacted us to let us know they are interested in supporting this event.

We can’t wait to see Chattanoogans running, biking, and exploring their city together on their long-anticipated greenway.
Creating connections in South Chattanooga

Chattanooga is a model city showcasing how greenways, parks, and green spaces can create a vibrant place to live in Tennessee. But the need for additional parks and increased access to green space across the city is evident despite the city’s beauty. In fact, our ParkScore™ data analysis from this year shows that 63 percent of Chattanoogans do not live within a 10-minute walk of a park.

At The Trust for Public Land, we believe that everyone—no matter what zip code they live in—deserves close-to-home access to a quality park.

Because of this, we are focusing our park creation efforts in South Chattanooga—where low-income households of color are disconnected from parks. We are working to provide better access to nature to improve health and education outcomes, create safe transportation routes to community resources, and strengthen community bonds.

Now more than ever, people need to be outside to stay mentally and physically healthy. Connecting communities will make for a better Chattanooga, providing new access to great parks where residents can gather and recreate.

Alton Park Connector

With the Alton Park Connector, The Trust for Public Land is connecting the Riverwalk to an established neighborhood for the first time. Transforming a former rail line into a 1.3-mile walking and biking path links the Southside to the river. The project is also an opportunity to connect the neighborhood’s history and its people to the rest of the city, highlighting Alton Park residents’ contributions to local African American history.

Alton Park resident Maria Noel notes that her community has often witnessed Chattanooga move forward, while the Southside has been left behind. The Alton Park Connector is one of many tools needed to connect the neighborhood with the rest of the city.

Mrs. Noel can’t walk a few steps out of her car without saying hello to her neighbors. She remembers every name, every family member, and nearly every story. Deeply dedicated to her community, she believes in the value and sense of belonging that comes along with knowing your neighbor. Mrs. Noel is determined to document Alton Park’s rich history and ensure that the Southside is not forgotten.

This year, The Trust for Public Land began working with her to better connect with the community as we start construction at the park. In the summer, she began interviewing long-time neighbors and former residents still rooted in the community to document the neighborhood’s history.

The Alton Park Connector will enrich the lives of Alton Park residents and give them a sense of place in the city. It is a connection such as this that will transform the city so that no one feels left behind. This is always at the root of our mission—building communities and protecting land for people.
**ARBOR DAY**

When the City of Chattanooga built Southside Community Park in 2018, a limited construction budget meant the beautiful new 5-acre park would have to do without some core amenities initially. One unfortunate cut: trees. While trees were planted along the roadway, the actual park was bare, and the community wanted shade.

We partnered with Bridge City Community and Net Resource Foundation to encourage youth to imagine optimal park use and identify where shade is most needed. With artist-created cardboard trees, residents picked the best spots for new trees, informing the planting plan.

We celebrated Arbor Day by planting 30 trees throughout the park in locations chosen by the community in partnership with the Chattanooga Tree Commission.

Southside Community Park is the trailhead for the future Alton Park Connector. We will continue delivering on the community’s vision for their park by transforming a vacant section of the park into a state-of-the-art play space.

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**EAST LAKE PARK FAMILY PHOTO DAY**

Many people living in South Chattanooga have expressed that they do not feel safe or at home in some of the local parks, meaning that they don’t have a sense of belonging in their neighborhood park, even though it was created for people of all ages, races, and nationalities to enjoy. With this in mind, Daniela Peterson, our Community Strategies Senior Advisor, set out to make an inclusive experience for all of the neighbors surrounding East Lake Park.

In spring 2020, we hosted the East Lake Family Photo Day. Neighbors were invited to have their picture taken by a professional photographer at the park, strengthening their connection and sense of pride and belonging at East Lake Park, which had just re-opened after a multi-million dollar renovation by the City of Chattanooga.

The pictures helped create ownership of the park and brought joy to families – some of whom had never had a professional picture taken before. The Trust for Public Land wants everyone to experience this feeling of pride and inclusivity at their close-to-home park.
VICTORY FOR PUBLIC LAND

On August 4, 2020, the Great American Outdoors Act was signed into law. This bipartisan-supported policy provides over $9.5 billion to fix the maintenance backlog at federal lands like national parks and forests. And it guarantees full funding—$900 million every year—for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which drives investments in parks and open spaces across the country.

Securing permanent, full, and dedicated funding for LWCF has been the top legislative priority for The Trust for Public Land for over 30 years. With stable funding, we can create more parks where they’re needed most.

Thanks to everyone who spoke up for LWCF. This is your victory!

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Our work is made possible thanks to the generosity of our supporters.

• **Bridging Chattanooga and Red Bank via Stringer’s Ridge:** Help us raise funds needed to complete the final stretch of this greenway to link Red Bank to the City of Chattanooga communities through White Oak Park to Stringer’s Ridge.

• **South Chattanooga Program:** Although newly built, Southside Community Park currently lacks play features and programs to attract young families and students from nearby schools. Through programming and events, we learned what improvements will make the park vibrant. With your support we can bring an exciting new play space to the park and animate a community amenity.

• **The Trust for Public Land in Tennessee:** Ensure our land-for-people experts across the country can continue to serve our state as we share knowledge, empower communities, and forge new partnerships.
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Thank you for joining us as we reimagine and realize the power of land for people to create stronger communities. We couldn’t do it without you.

Join us.
The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

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