



Trust for Public Land
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Tacoma Community Schoolyards

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RE: Project Narrative for UW Out in Front

Community Schoolyards™ projects transform underused outdoor schoolyard space into vibrant public parks, full of trees, shade, and places to exercise, play, and enjoy the outdoors that stay open to neighbors after school and on weekends.

Community Schoolyards™ can help solve the park equity gap in America. If every public schoolyard in America functioned as a shared outdoor space, 20 million more people would have access to a park within a 10-minute walk of home. This single change would solve the problem of outdoor access for one fifth of Americans who don't have a park close to home.

Trust for Public Land is working in partnership with Metro Parks Tacoma and Tacoma Public Schools to ensure that every person in Tacoma has a quality park within a 10-minute walk of home. By maximizing the use of existing schoolyards to serve as parks these spaces will benefit children and adults. Currently, 31% of Tacoma residents cannot access parks or open spaces within a 10-minute walk of their homes, the largest park access gap of any major city in Washington. Renovating and opening all of Tacoma's schoolyards to the public would increase the percentage of Tacomans living near a park from 69% to 88%.

Community Schoolyards projects have the potential to help shrink the park equity divide. In the 100 largest U.S. cities, neighborhoods where residents predominantly identify as people of color have access to an average of 44 percent less park space per person than predominantly white neighborhoods, data analysis by The Trust for Public Land has found. A similar pattern emerges in low-income versus high-income communities.

By the end of 2024 we will have completed five Community Schoolyards™.

1. Helen B. Stafford Elementary

550 students attend Stafford Elementary in the South End neighborhood of Tacoma. Neighbors frequently use the schoolyard for walking, gathering, and drop-in activities. Trees, seating areas, improvements to the track and playfield, and new, interactive play equipment will transform this schoolyard into a green play space and vibrant community hub. The investments in this schoolyard will create a new high-quality park within a 10-minute walk of 5,162 nearby residents.

2. Jennie Reed Elementary

450 students attend Jennie Reed Elementary in the South End neighborhood of Tacoma. The school's proximity to I-5 results in noise and air pollution in the schoolyard. The addition of more trees and vegetation will help to buffer and address the noise and air pollution. Jennie Reed Elementary benefits from an active PTA group and a local community group which have both played large roles in the design and community engagement process. Investing in this schoolyard will create a new high-quality park within a 10-minute walk of 644 nearby residents.

3. Mann Elementary

450 students attend Mann Elementary in the South End neighborhood of Tacoma. Uneven surfaces across the asphalt play area and an outdated playground create access issues for students. The schoolyard will benefit from interactive and accessible play equipment, more trees, improvements to the track and playfield, and additional seating areas. The Mann Elementary PTA is providing important insight on new amenities and schoolyard design. Investing in this schoolyard will bring a high-quality park within a 10-minute walk of 3,075 nearby residents.

4. Whitman Elementary

More than 400 students attend Whitman Elementary in the South End neighborhood of Tacoma. The schoolyard includes a significant asphalt-covered play area and an upper area that includes a grass playfield with an informal track, raised planter boxes, play equipment set on wood chips, and adult exercise equipment. The community is excited to see improvements to the track and playfield, new amenities in the lower asphalt area, and interactive play equipment. The Whitman Elementary PTA and several community leaders are contributing to the design of the new schoolyard. Investing in this schoolyard will create a high-quality park within a 10-minute walk of 2,189 nearby residents.

5. Larchmont Elementary

370 students attend Larchmont Elementary in the Eastside neighborhood of Tacoma. The schoolyard includes a playground, a natural turf field, and passive grassy area. The grassy area represents a multitude of opportunities to bring the community's vision to life for this play space. Students and neighbors already use the schoolyard regularly for drop-in activities like games of cricket. Creating a green schoolyard in this space would fortify community ownership and solidify the schoolyard as a community hub. Investing in this schoolyard will create a new high-quality park within a 10-minute walk of 1,102 nearby residents.

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