

PUBLIC SPACES + PRIVATE MONEY



WHY THIS SESSION?

Urban conservation means connecting people to nature and investing in public spaces that help make communities more sustainable, resilient, and livable.

Learn more about national models of urban conservation that are being implemented by The Conservation Fund and partners across the country and will gain an understanding of the unique opportunities that are available through public and private partnerships especially as it relates to funding.

Participants will also learn about a new initiative in Michigan that uses a combination of technical support, grants and a unique revolving loan fund model to assist communities in completing urban conservation projects.

If the outdoor participant base does not become more diverse over the next 30 years, the percentage of outdoor recreation participants in the population could slip from 54 percent today to under 40 percent by 2060.

Increasingly the accessibility to natural areas near urban centers and ensuring these centers are welcome, culturally relevant, designed with environmental conditions and climate impacts in mind, and co-created with the community members for whom these areas will serve should be a priority to ensure the outdoors are enjoyed by everyone, regardless of ZIP code, background, or income.



What is a public park?

Any area or portions of areas dedicated or designated by any federal, state, or local agency primarily for public recreational use.

What is a park conservancy?

A nonprofit park-benefit organization that fills in the gaps of public park agencies, including raising money, overseeing construction and maintenance, and developing programming.

What is a community development corporation?

A not-for-profit organization incorporated to provide programs, offer services and engage in other activities that promote and support community development. CDCs usually serve a geographic location such as a neighborhood or a town.

What is a land bank?

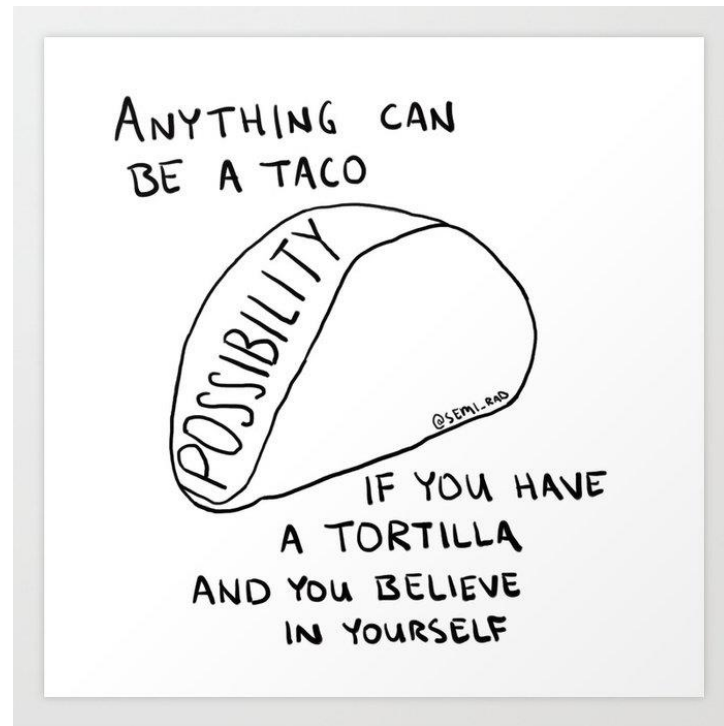
A public authority created to acquire, hold, manage, and sometimes redevelop property in order to return these properties to productive use to meet community goals, such as increasing affordable housing or stabilizing property values.

What is a land conservancy?

Land conservancies, also known as land trusts, are community-based nonprofit organizations dedicated to the permanent protection and care of land.

WHAT IS URBAN CONSERVATION?

- » Urban farms and farming operations.
- » Developing and managing rain gardens.
- » Stewarding parks and green spaces.
- » Operating a nature center in a city.
- » Creating and maintaining trails and greenways.
- » Restoring and stabilizing wetlands and streams.
- » Tree planting and urban forestry.
- » Revitalizing a city-owned park.
- » Acquiring land for use as a public park, nature preserve, or passive recreation area.
- » Use of deeds, conservation easements, or fee-simple ownership.



DEFINING URBAN CONSERVATION

There is no uniform definition or agreement regarding what constitutes urban parks or urban conservation.

However, a working definition that emerged through this process was, ***“Urban conservation involves improving and restoring, and in some cases preserving, environmental conditions in cities and densely populated areas.”***



2022 OUTDOOR PARTICIPATION REPORT

- » Outdoor participant base has increased 6.9% since the COVID pandemic began.
- » Youth participation is climbing but the frequency of their participation is declining.
- » New outdoor participants are more diverse than the overall outdoor participant base and are driving increasing diversity not only by ethnicity but also across age groups.
- » Core Participants, defined as someone who participates 51 times or more in outdoor recreation activities in the past 12 months, has declined from 71.9% in 2007 to 58.7% of the participant base in 2021.
- » Number of participants 55 and older increased more than 14% since 2019, and senior participants ages 65 and older were in the fastest growing age category with 16.9% growth since the COVID pandemic began in early 2020.
- » Despite increases in the number of participants, the number of outdoor outings is declining significantly.

KEY FINDINGS

Since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in March of 2020, the number of new and returning (lapsed) outdoor participants has increased 26%.

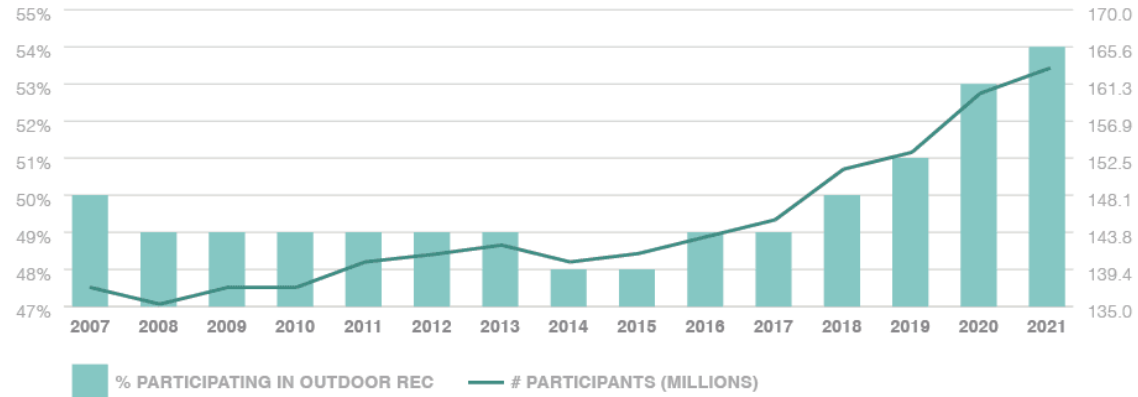
The growth in new participants and returning participants in 2021 was the highest ever recorded.

There was a reasonable expectation that during 2021, the second year of the pandemic, outdoor participation would return to 2019 levels as indoor activity including, dining, sporting events, and fitness centers and gyms, reopened.

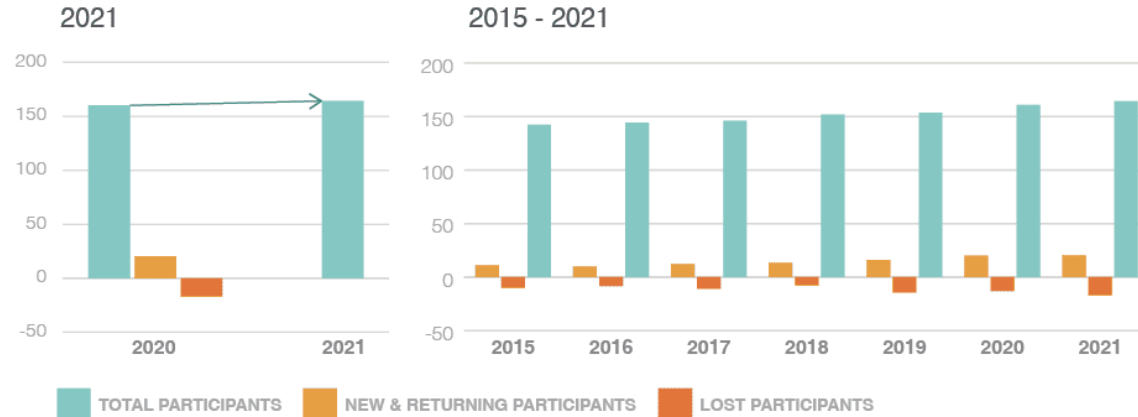
The 2021 data indicates that participation in outdoor recreation retained momentum in 2021. This data indicates that outdoor recreation is “sticky;” once someone begins to participate, they are likely to continue to participate.

OUTDOOR PARTICIPATION GROWTH TRENDS

2007 TO 2021



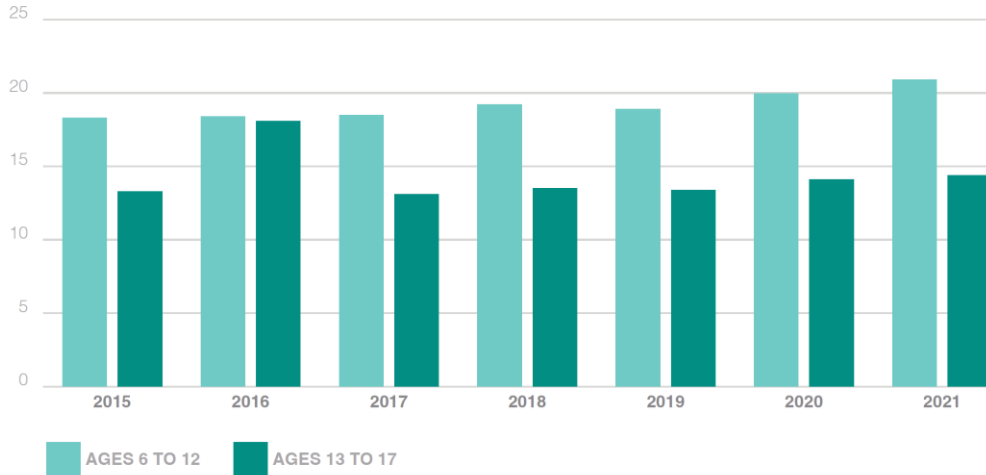
TOTAL, NEW/LAPSED, & LOST PARTICIPANTS (MILLIONS)



THE NEXT GENERATION: YOUTH OUTDOORS

YOUTH OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPANTS (MILLIONS)

2015 TO 2021

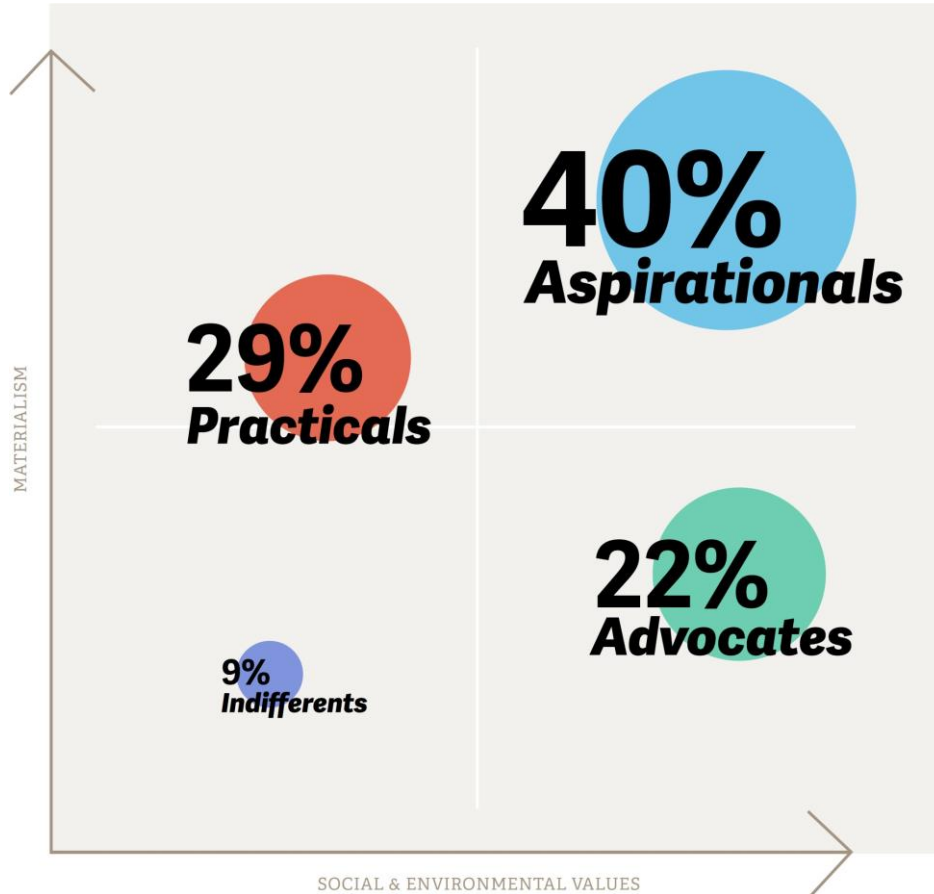


In 2021, OUTDOOR PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED:

20.9 MILLION
YOUNGER KIDS (6 TO 12)

14.4 MILLION
OLDER KIDS (13 TO 17)

Younger kids are more active in the outdoors than teens and adults regardless of ethnicity. Ages 6-17 who are white have the highest participation rates of any age or ethnic group with nearly 70% participation. African American kids participate at much lower rates most likely due to lack of access to outdoor spaces.



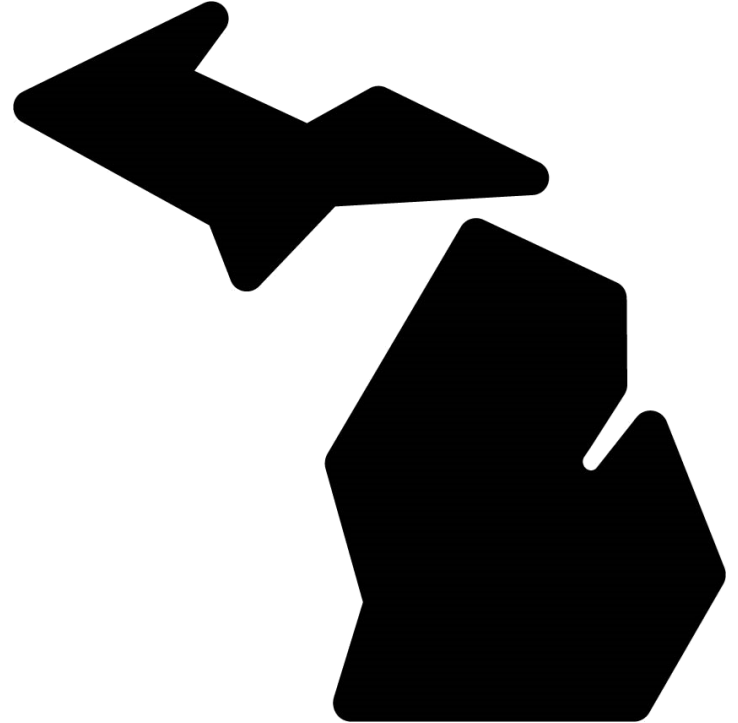
The rise of Aspirationals represents a fundamental shift in culture as the values, needs and priorities of a new generation move toward authenticity, wellbeing, sustainability and social purpose.

Aspirationals can help brand leaders and marketers drive relevance, sales, loyalty, philanthropy and positive impact for businesses.

OUTDOOR ACCESS + CONSERVATION

Prioritizing efforts that guarantee and increase access to green spaces and nature – ensuring that all Michiganders can experience the outdoors.

- » Continue and expand advocacy to protect public lands and increase funding to meet increased demand.
- » Advocate for sustainable funding prioritizing close-to-home access, especially in nature-starved areas.



OBSERVATIONS

- There are immediate and significant opportunities in Michigan to improve, restore, manage, and, if possible, permanently protect environmental conditions for people who live in urbanized areas, particularly in areas of historic disinvestment.
- Park conservancies in Michigan have extraordinary networks, access to power, access to funding, and significant technical skills and competencies related to urban conservation.
- The land conservancy movement within Michigan and nationally has historically focused on the protection of relatively large tracts of land in undeveloped areas, but there is a desire by some to shift this area of focus.

WHAT'S WORKING

- Prioritizing urban conservation projects through collaborative, community-rooted, and neighborhood-led processes.
- Collaborating across public and private sectors, and with new entities, and trying new approaches.
- Investing in priority projects.
- Policy approaches that center equity in conservation efforts.

OBSTACLES

- Personal beliefs, mindsets, and motivations.
- Organizational and entity capacity limitations.
- Lack of leadership or awareness among elected officials and community leaders.
- Systemic and project-based patterns of public and private investments.
- Systemic lack of equity and justice.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Individual Level

People may choose to stay curious, seek education and learn about urban conservation, join conversations, and evaluate their personal frames and theories of change related to public spaces.

- Organizational Level

Within public and private sector entities there are opportunities for change relative to values and culture, strategy development and prioritization of projects and resource allocation, board composition, and staff composition and competencies.

- Community and Systems Level

What is our movement about and what should it aspire to be?