

Parks and Trails Make Livable Cities



People don't have much open space attached to their homes, so parks are really our backyard.

STEPHANIE LINDER
San Francisco Conservation
Campaign volunteer

JARED HANSON

SAN FRANCISCO AND SANTA FE are surrounded by stunningly beautiful natural landscapes, making these cities wonderful places to live and visit. Yet within their urban grids, where people live and work, accessible and beautiful outdoor space is equally important.

THE CAMPAIGN PARTNERSHIPS

Partnering with The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the Conservation Campaign (TCC) gave the Santa Fe campaign, led by local bicycling and park advocates and the Santa Fe Conservation Trust, the confidence and expertise it needed to raise money for a direct-mail and media campaign. In San Francisco, the TCC-sponsored committee facilitated a broad coalition, including San Francisco Parks Trust, the Neighborhood Parks Council and TPL. TCC Vice President Rachel Dinno directed fundraising efforts and the Board of Directors hosted a fundraising and visibility event.

Voters in both cities affirmed this sentiment in 2008 by approving major new public financing—\$185 million in San Francisco and \$30.3 million in Santa Fe—to restore neglected neighborhood parks and add trails.

“San Francisco is a very densely populated city, where people don't have much open space attached to their homes, so parks are really our backyard,” said Stephanie Linder, a volunteer and donor for the bond measure campaign.

As new research has shown, access to parks and trails for exercising, commuting, playing and relaxing should not be considered a luxury. Safe and well-maintained outdoor public space improves urban residents' physical and mental health, keeps youth out of trouble, reduces pollution and knits communities together—benefits that have both social

and economic value. Parks are where children can find a sense of freedom and a connection with nature that, as Richard Louv brought to public attention in *Last Child in the Woods*, is critical to their development.

In Santa Fe, the new funding will implement a master plan, developed with citizen input, to revive drought-damaged parks with new irrigation systems and desert landscaping and to complete an off-road network of trails.

“The new citywide trails are not only going to allow people to get outdoors more easily, but also will connect neighbors and neighborhoods and really help us feel more like a community,” said Rici Peterson, executive director of the Santa Fe Conservation Trust.

The San Francisco bond is paying for

long-overdue modernization of playgrounds, bathrooms, sports fields and other park facilities throughout the city, including renovating 12 of the most worn-out parks, planting trees, and building trails to connect the park system and along the waterfront.

“In San Francisco, which is such a multicultural community, the park is the one place where everybody comes together,” said Linder. “Parks are the heart of the community.”

Voters in San Francisco and Santa Fe affirmed the importance of urban outdoor space with the passage of bonds to create trails and restore parks. ABOVE: Dolores Park in San Francisco. INSET: South Mission Playground



MICHAEL DILLINGHAM