

Parks Research Update: Park Equity Tool Refresh



December 4, 2025 – Ismael Ramirez and Magdelyn Herzig

REGIONAL GOAL: EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE REGION

This regional goal states:

Our region is equitable and inclusive. Racial inequities and injustices experienced by historically marginalized communities have been eliminated; and all people feel welcome, included, and empowered.



Equity Analysis Part of Long-range Plan Req.



- “Minn. Stat. 473.313 requires a long-range plan to be developed by each regional park implementing agency in consultation with all affected municipalities.”
- “...Long-range plans must include a demand forecast and summaries of partner and community engagement, including an **equity analysis**”

What is The Parks Equity Tool

- The **Parks Equity Tool** is an app that **supports the equity analysis requirement** by comparing demographics and park access, using the American Community Survey (ACS) and Met Council data.
- Additionally, the tool can be used for **outreach**, programming **planning**, and **research**.
- The functionality of the tool allows users to visualize the data through **maps** and **figures**. It also allows to download tabular datasets.

Regional Parks and Trails Equity Tool

Analyze population characteristics near regional parks and trails in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. This tool helps implementing agencies fulfill equity requirements in their long-range plans.



Explore the Map

Visualize population demographics and park access patterns across the region.

- View census data by geography
- Toggle buffer zones (1-7.5 miles)
- See park and trail coverage

[Open Interactive Map](#)



Analyze Data

Compare demographic characteristics across parks, trails, and agencies.

- Plot unit-level statistics
- Compare across agencies
- Download data tables

[View Data Explorer](#)



Learn More

Understand the tool's methodology and get help.

[View Data Sources & Methods](#)

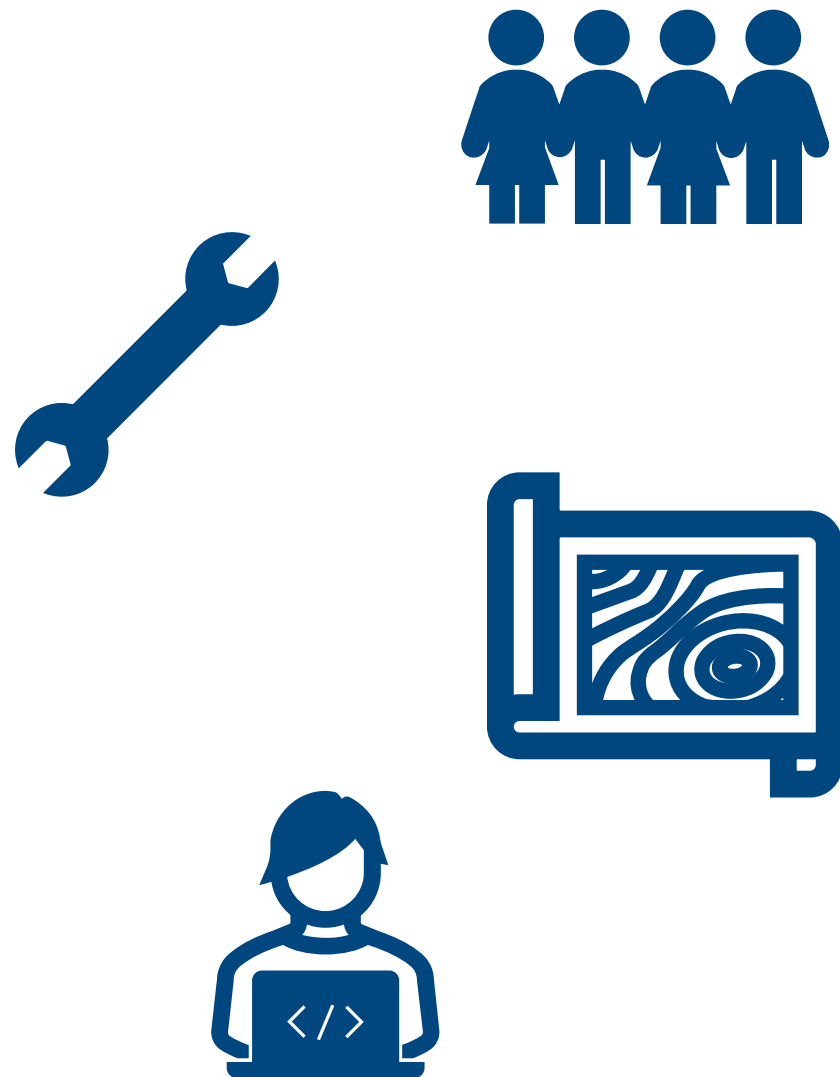
 **Need Help?**

Questions about interpreting results or using this tool?
Contact: [Ismael Ramirez](#)

Why update the Equity Analysis Tool?

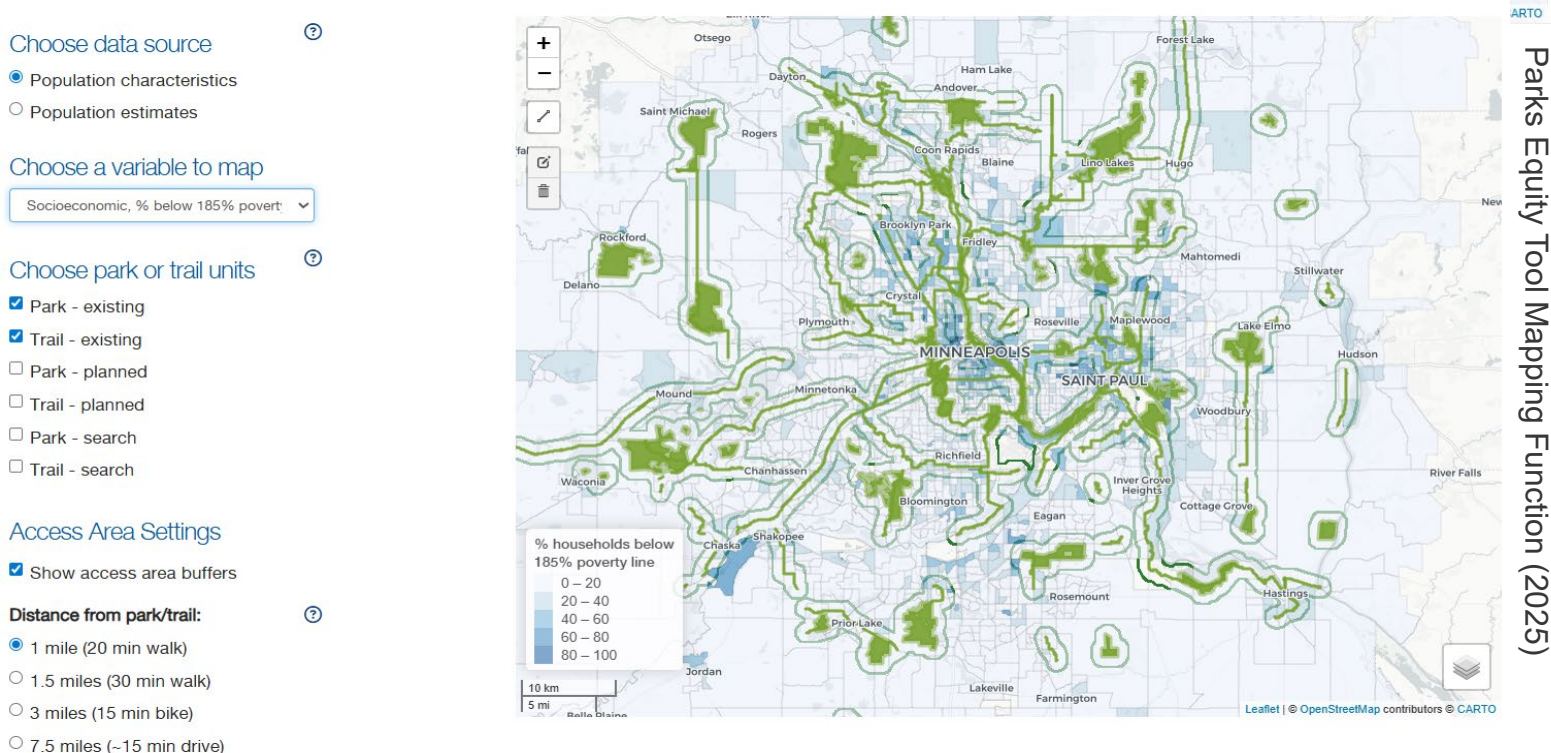
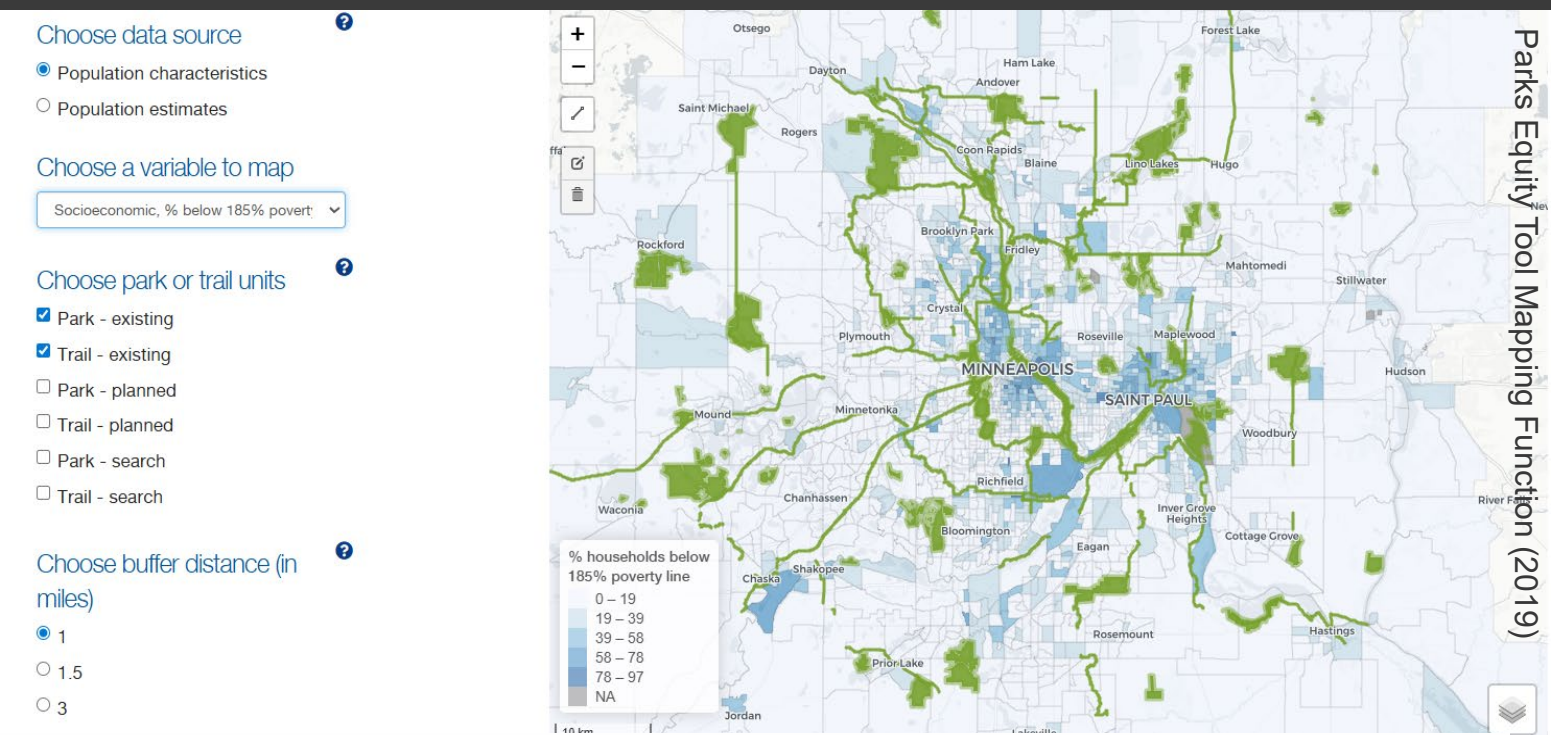
- The former equity tool was using outdated American Community Survey data and code
- Relied on manual updates
- Desire to improve visuals and smoother functionality for all users
- More intuitive and easier to navigate

Main Changes: Data Updates + Workflow Improvements



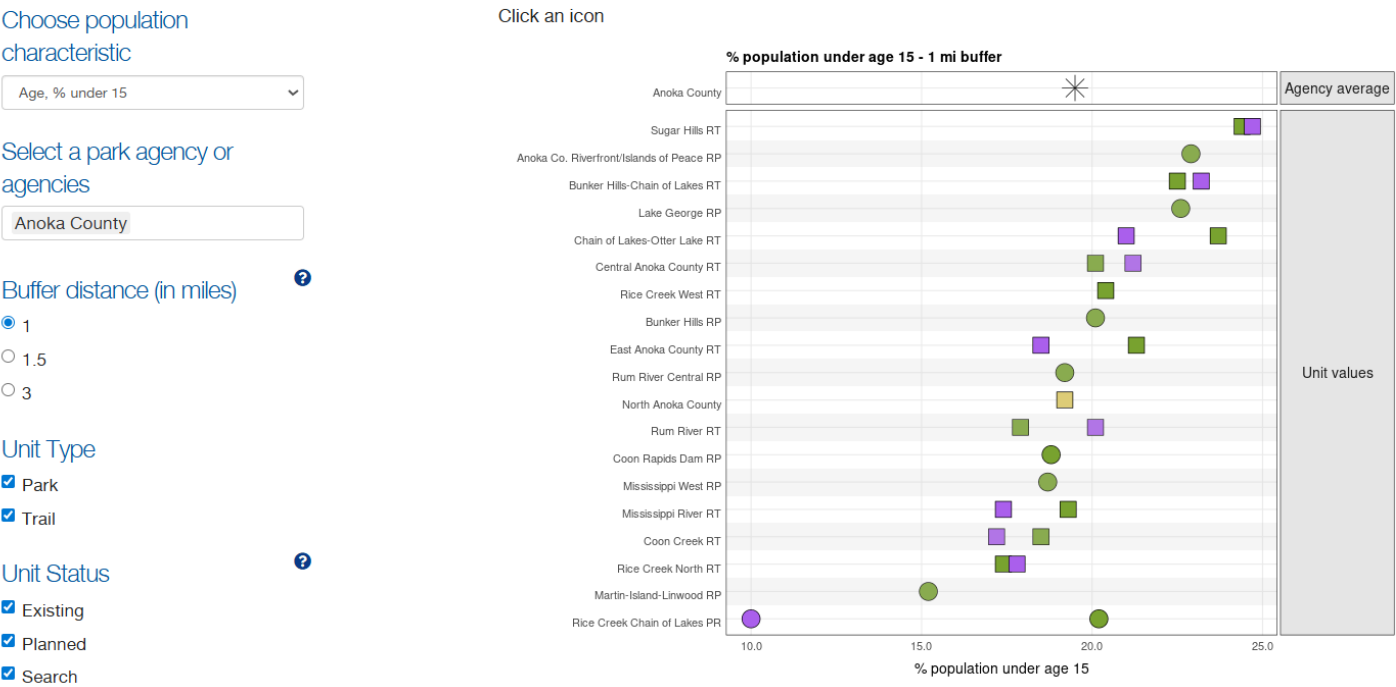
- ACS 2023 demographics integrated
- Ensures Park Agencies are working with recent data that reflects their communities.
- Incorporated Information Systems (IS) best practices in the tool.
- Reduced maintenance burden and improved accuracy
- Repaired and made consistent spatial database queries
- Future proof the code for future updates

Main Changes: Visuals and User Experience

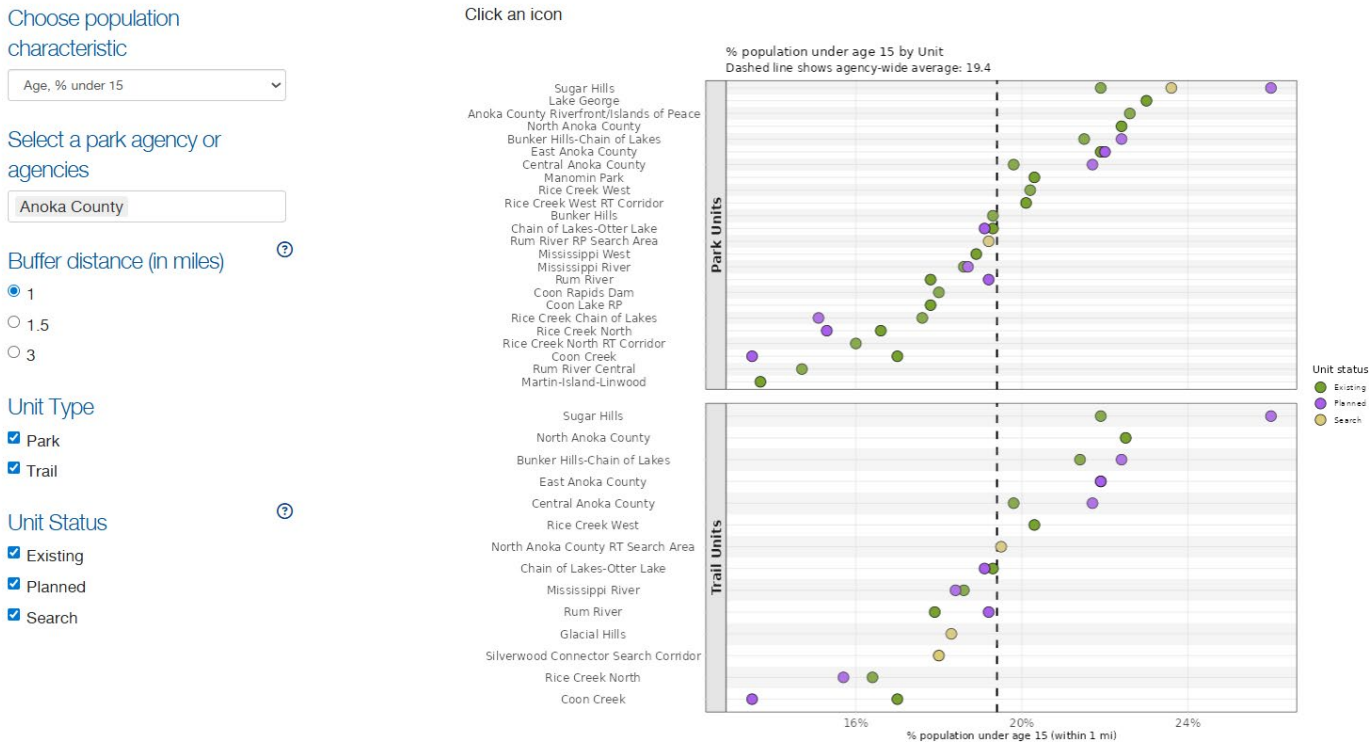


- Most current map data (e.g., parks/trails, transit stops, water features, agency boundaries)

Main Changes: Visuals and User Experience



2019 Plotting Function



2025 Plotting Function

- Recreated graphs to meet research best practices.
- Improved ease of navigation
- Added more context and resources to the website

Looking Ahead



The Parks Equity Tool supports the Equity Analysis Requirement in Imagine 2050's long-range park planning.

The 2025 update brings the tool up to date and allows Implementing Agencies to use it for outreach and planning.

In the future (next steps), the Council will seek feedback on which parts of the tool are most useful to implementing agencies, helping this evolving tool better serve the region.



Thank You!!!

Ismael Ramirez, Ph.D.
Parks and Trails Principal Researcher

Magdelyn Herzig
Research Intern

