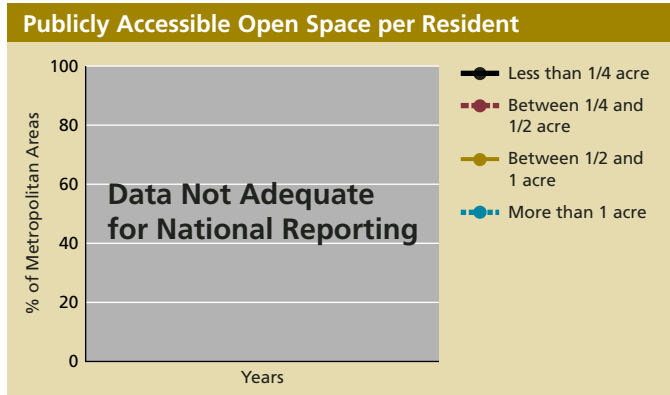




SYSTEM DIMENSIONS	CHEMICAL AND PHYSICAL	BIOLOGICAL COMPONENTS	HUMAN USES
Extent Pattern	Nutrients, Carbon, Oxygen Contaminants Physical	Plants and Animals Communities Ecological Productivity	Food, Fiber, and Water Recreation and Other Services

⊖ Publicly Accessible Open Space per Resident



What Is This Indicator, and Why Is It Important?

This indicator would report the amount of open space—land that is dominated by “natural” surfaces, like grass or woods, along with lakes, rivers, beaches, and wetlands—that is accessible to the general public in large metropolitan areas. Specifically, the indicator would report the percentage of metropolitan areas with different amounts of open space per resident.

Americans enjoy outdoor recreation, and urban and suburban residents place a high value on access to public spaces where they can picnic, play ball, swim, hike, fish, walk their dogs, enjoy nature, and engage in any of a

myriad of other outdoor activities. The amount of such open space per resident often determines how intensely such places will be used and how crowded they will be.

Why Can't This Indicator Be Reported at This Time? There are no consistent or comprehensive surveys of the amount of publicly accessible open space in cities and suburban areas. A combination of satellite remote sensing and local tax and land records would be required for reporting on this indicator.

Discussion This indicator focuses on public areas that are natural or relatively undeveloped. In practice, this means that areas dominated by grass, woods, dirt, or other unpaved surfaces would be counted, while predominately paved areas would not (paved walkways in a park that is primarily grass would not “disqualify” the area). In addition, areas counted in this indicator are those that are accessible to the general public, even if fees (such as for a county-run golf course) are charged. Thus, a public golf course and even some cemeteries would qualify, but a farm or a country club would not. Note that a change in population without a change in open space would change the value of this indicator. Area of Urban and Suburban Lands (p. 181) provides a context for this indicator, because it reports the overall percentage of natural lands in the urban/suburban landscape; however, it does not distinguish between publicly accessible and inaccessible lands.

The technical note for this indicator is on page 269.