

Environmental Justice: Allentown - Accessibility to Parks and Greenspaces

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Introduction:

Greenspace and park standards have long been the subject of much discussion. How far is the nearest park or greenspace from your home? Is it within your neighborhood? Is it close enough to walk to? Just as standards for school location call for the school to be within walking distance of the homes it serves, so should neighborhood parks and greenspaces be within walking distance of the families in the neighborhood (Moeller). A survey of park officials in the 50 biggest U.S. cities done by The Trust for Public Land found that only 14 cities have a goal for the maximum distance any resident should live from their nearest park. Among the 14 cities, the standard ranges from one-eighth of a mile to a mile (TTPL). One common maximum distance is half a mile which is commonly considered to be a ten-minute walk. Easy access, such as a ten-minute walk, to a park or green space is extremely beneficial in many aspects of a community including mental health, physical, social, occupational, environmental and economic benefits for all population groups, particularly among lower socioeconomic groups. This report will discuss the importance of green spaces, the benefits previously noted and will also assess the walking distance between each school within Allentown and nearby parks and green spaces.

The Ten-Minute Walk:

The National Recreation and Park Association, Trust for Public Land, The Urban Land Institute and mayors from 268 cities have created a “10-minute walk” effort, seeking to help all people live within a half-mile of a high-quality park or green space (10 Minute Walk). A recent national survey of 1,000 people in the U.S. conducted by PSB Research on behalf of 10 Minute Walk

reveals just how crucial these green spaces are. The survey found that two-thirds of Americans agree that their quality of life would improve with better access to a park or green space within a 10-minute walk from their homes. It also found that city dwellers were most likely to value having green space close to home and acknowledge that it would increase their quality of life, including their physical and mental health.

The Importance of Green Spaces:

Urban green spaces are very important as they fulfill a range of different roles since the intended purpose differs with each user such as social spaces, areas for recreation and cultural purposes or economic and environmental purposes. Parks and greenspaces are often venues for exercise and physical activity either on an individual or group basis. They are also commonly used for relaxation and stress reduction (Chee Keng Lee). One study conducted by Frances Kuo of the University of Illinois details the importance of green spaces as it finds numerous benefits received by people living near green spaces. Kuo studied 28 identical high-rise public housing projects and found that the people living closer to green spaces boasted a stronger sense of community, were less aggressive and violent, coped better with everyday stress and hardship, performed better on tests of concentration, and managed problems more effectively (Barton).

Environmental Benefits:

A key value of urban green spaces are the environmental benefits and ecosystem services they provide. For example, they counteract the urban heat island effect caused by heat being absorbed and trapped by asphalt, concrete, and other building materials, which in turn reduces the energy cost of cooling buildings. Urban greenery minimizes air, water, and noise pollution, and also offsets greenhouse gas emissions through CO₂ absorption (Pataki). A Chicago-based study

determined that the city's trees filtered 234 tons of particulate pollution and cleansed the air of 98 tons of nitrogen dioxide, 93 tons of sulfur dioxide, and 17 tons of carbon monoxide.

Physical Benefits:

Numerous studies in the past decade have reported the link between contact with green spaces and health benefits both at the individual and population level (Lee). Recent studies in the Netherlands and Japan show that people with easy access to green space boasted better health and lower mortality rates. Even relatively passive contact with nature, such as viewing it from a window, was found to lower blood pressure and anxiety levels (Amano). There is a growing body of evidence indicating that physical activity levels may be influenced by the urban environment. Studies have found associations between the availability of urban green space and physical activity levels and that a significant proportion of vigorous physical activity in childhood takes place in urban parks (Amano). It is also linked to a lower likelihood of being overweight or obese. Access to green spaces ultimately may help promote active lifestyles in the urban setting.

Mental health and wellbeing:

Interactions with urban greenspaces and parks have positive restorative effects on mental health and wellbeing and may also help to provide a buffer against stressful life events (van den Berg). Benefits may also arise from participation in activities occurring in these spaces, such as social interaction or physical exercise (Chee Keng Lee) and include alleviation of stress and anxiety as well as improved mood and attention. One study found that decreased walking distance to useable green space was associated with decreased anxiety and mood disorder treatment counts in an urban environment (Nutsford).

Social contact:

Urban green spaces provide opportunities for and facilitate social interactions to occur. These interactions could, in turn, help reduce social isolation, generate social capital, and lead to greater personal resilience and wellbeing (Haq). One ethnographic study from Scotland observed that green space had different social meanings and understandings for various user groups. This, in turn, shaped how people utilized green spaces and facilitated different types of social interaction. Regular social interaction by park users, eg, could form the basis of greater community ties, foster a sense of identity and belonging, and generate more social capital (Dinnie).

Violence, and Crime Reduction:

Most people assume that increased vegetation translates to an increase of crime by offering hiding places for criminals and criminal acts. Contrary to this belief, maintained green spaces actually reduce crime. A study of 98 vegetated and unvegetated apartment buildings in Chicago showed that vegetated spaces cut crime by half. In addition, it was found that vegetated areas inspired pride for surroundings which translated into less litter and less graffiti. Vegetated landscapes also invite more people to use them, which ensures more eyes on the watch to prevent crime in outdoor spaces (Shepley).

Environmental Justice and how it relates to this report:

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies (Schlosberg). Fair treatment means that no population bears a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or from the execution of federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies.

Allentown Schools:**Elementary Schools -**

Brigadier General Anna Mae Hays Elementary School

Central Elementary

Hiram W. Dodd Elementary

Jackson Early Childhood Center

Jefferson Elementary

Lehigh Parkway Elementary

Mosser Elementary

Muhlenberg Elementary

Newcomer Academy

Ramos Elementary

Ritter Elementary

Roosevelt Elementary

Sheridan Elementary

Union Terrace Elementary

Washington Elementary

Middle Schools -

Harrison-Morton Middle School

Raub Middle School

South Mountain Middle School

Trexler Middle School

High Schools -

Building 21

Louis E. Dieruff High School

William Allen High School

Allentown Parks and Greenspaces:

5th Street Playground

Alton Park

Andre Reed Park

Arts Park

Bicentennial Park

Bucky Boyle Park

Canal Park

Cedar Creek Parkway

Joseph S. Daddona Lake and Terrace

Dixon Street Dog Park

East Side Reservoir

East Side Trail

Fountain Park

Franklin Park

Ithaca Park

Jackson St. Park

Jordan Meadows

Jordan Park

Keck Park

Keck Triangle

Kimmet's Lock

La Placita

Lil'-Le-Hi Trout Nursery

Little Lehigh Parkway

Lumber and Benton Playlot

Percy Ruhe Park

Roosevelt Park

South Mountain Reservoir

South St. Park

Stevens Park

Trexler Memorial Park

Trout Creek Parkway

Valania Park

Walden Terrace Park

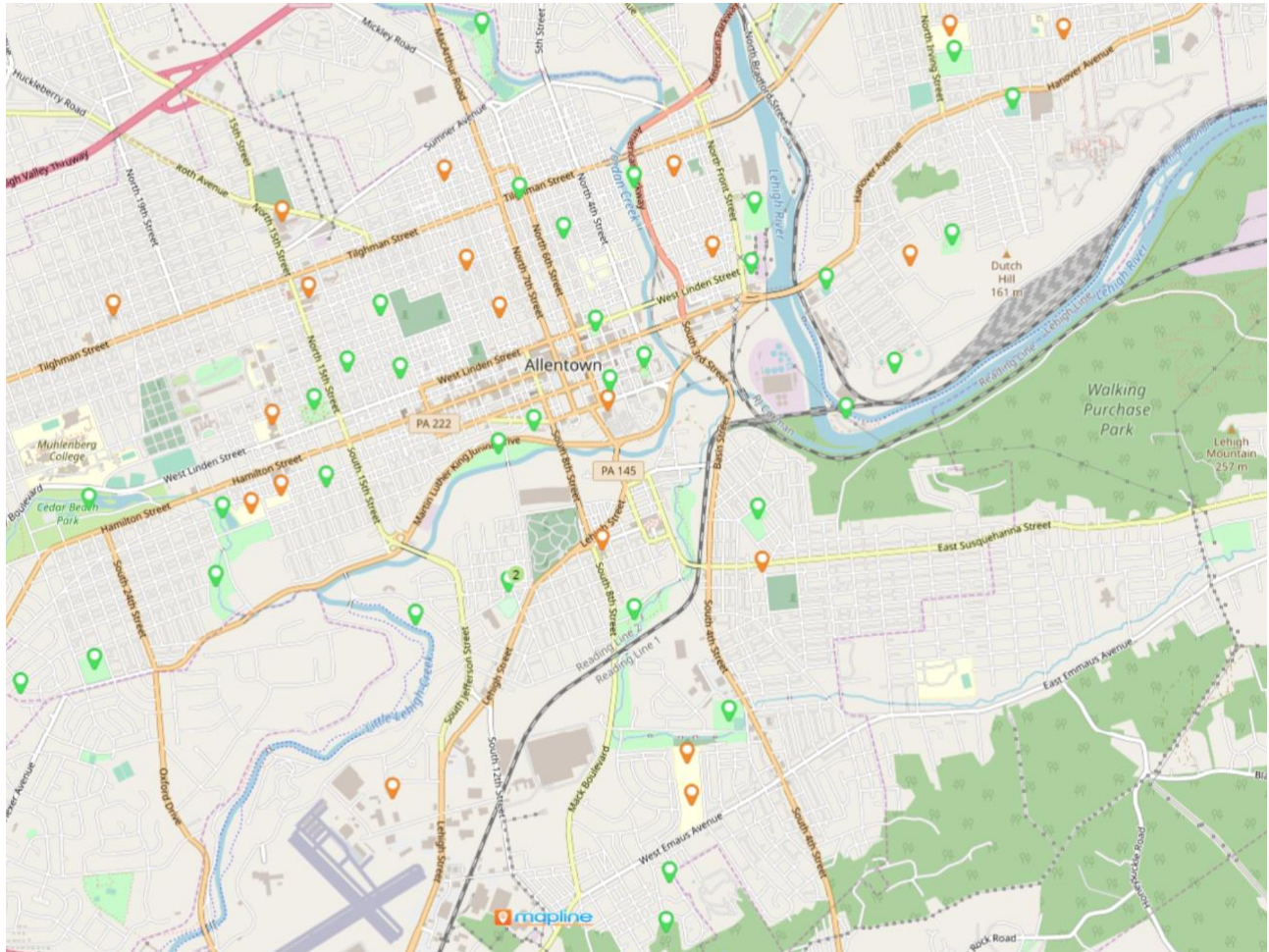
Walking Purchase Park

West Park

Map of School and Park Locations:

Green Pin- Parks

Orange Pin- Schools



Allentown Parks and Greenspaces in Relation to Allentown Schools

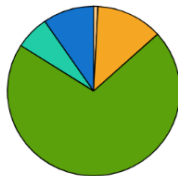
The pink circle in the middle of each map shows the location of the school mentioned and the pink border that is around it shows the area that is within a 10-minute walking distance of that school. Below the map is a chart of the demographic information pertaining to each school.

Brigadier Elementary School:



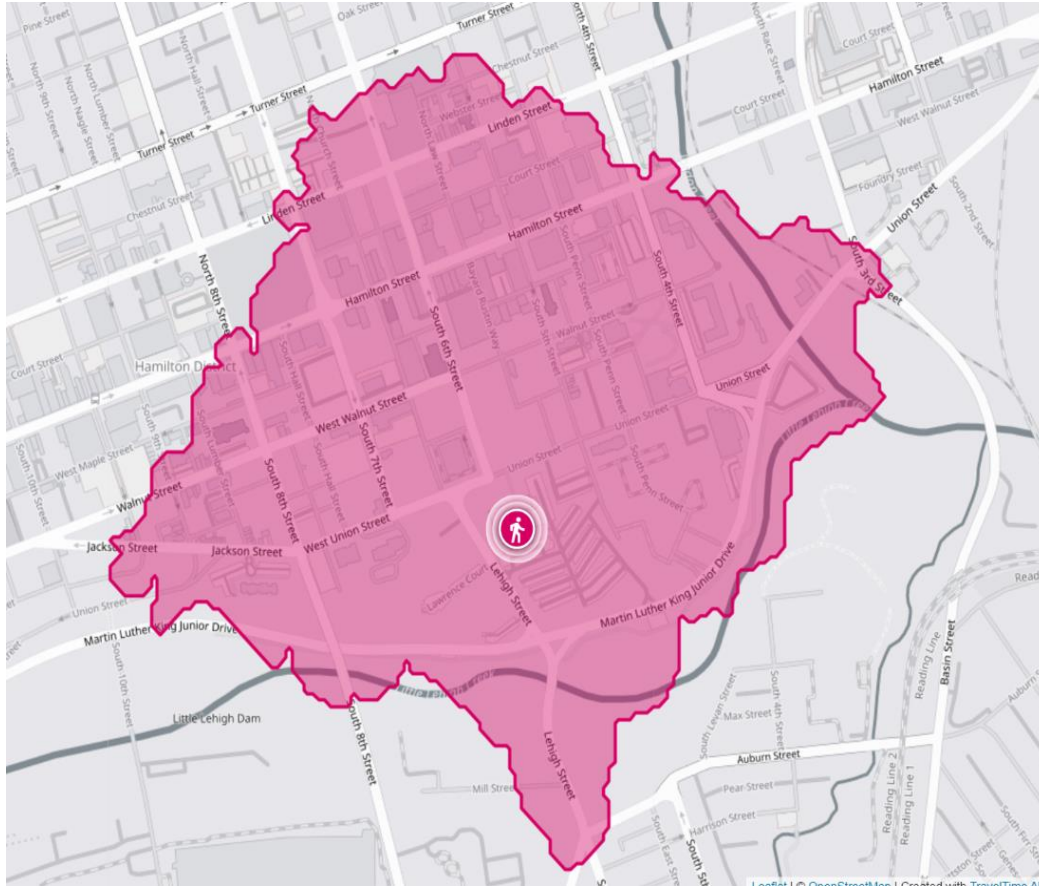
There is one park within a 10-minute walking distance of Brigadier Elementary School: Franklin Park.

Percent Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



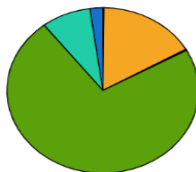
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.0%
Asian	0.8%
Black	12.5%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.0%
Hispanic	70.7%
White	6.4%
2 or More Races	9.6%







Building 21:



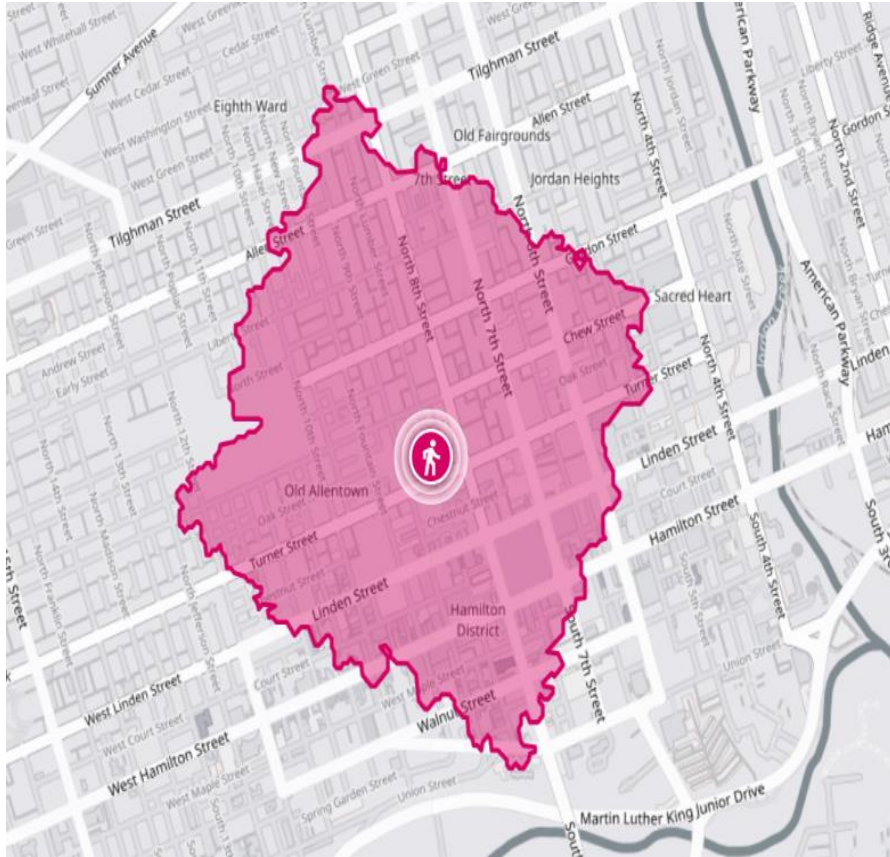
There are five parks within a 10-minute walking distance of Building 21: Arts Park, Valania Park, Jackson St Park, and Fountain Park.

Percent Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



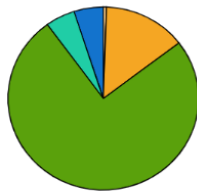
	American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.0%
	Asian	0.2%
	Black	16.5%
	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.2%
	Hispanic	72.6%
	White	8.3%
	2 or More Races	2.2%

Central Elementary School:



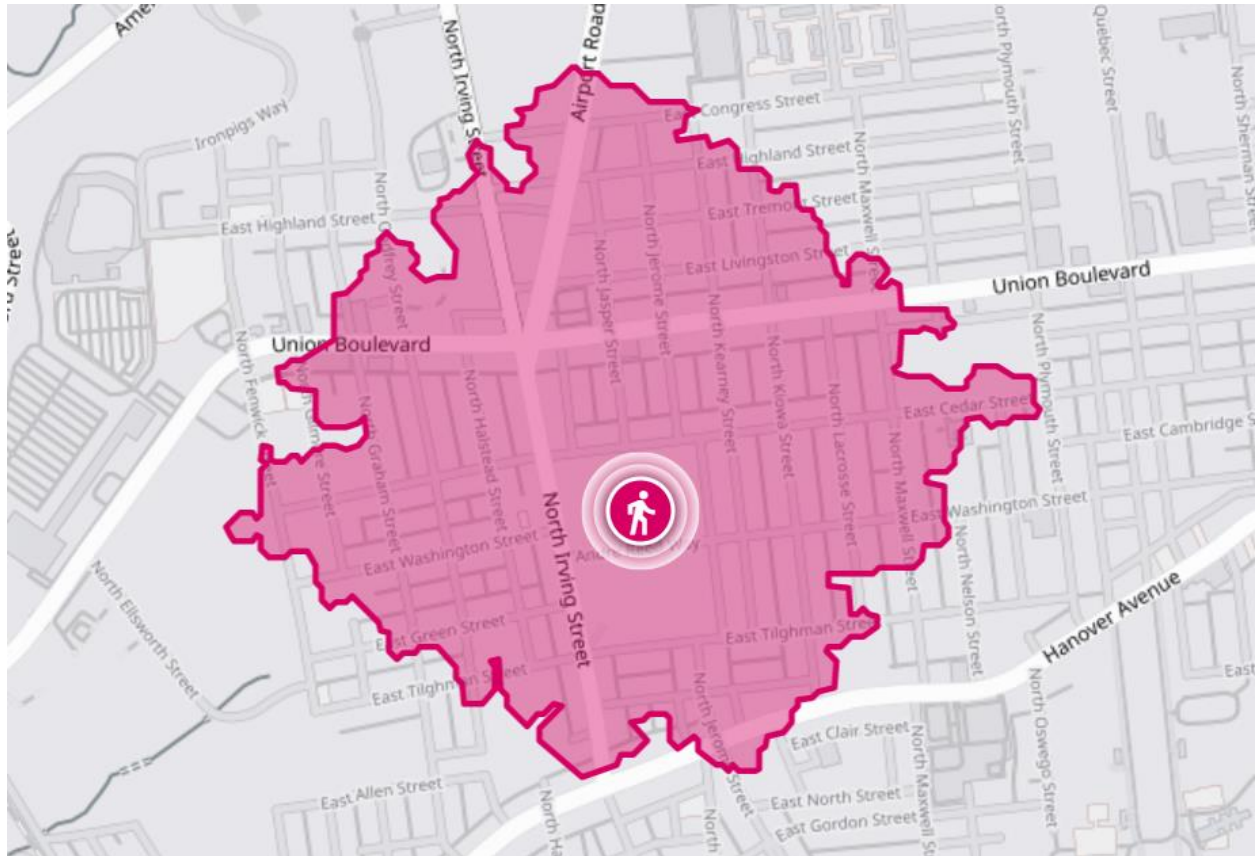
There are **no** parks within a 10-minute walking distance of Central Elementary.

Percent Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



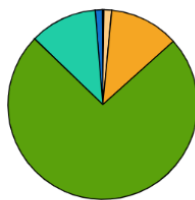
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.0%
Asian	0.5%
Black	14.1%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.0%
Hispanic	75.4%
White	5.0%
2 or More Races	5.0%

Louis E. Dieruff High School:



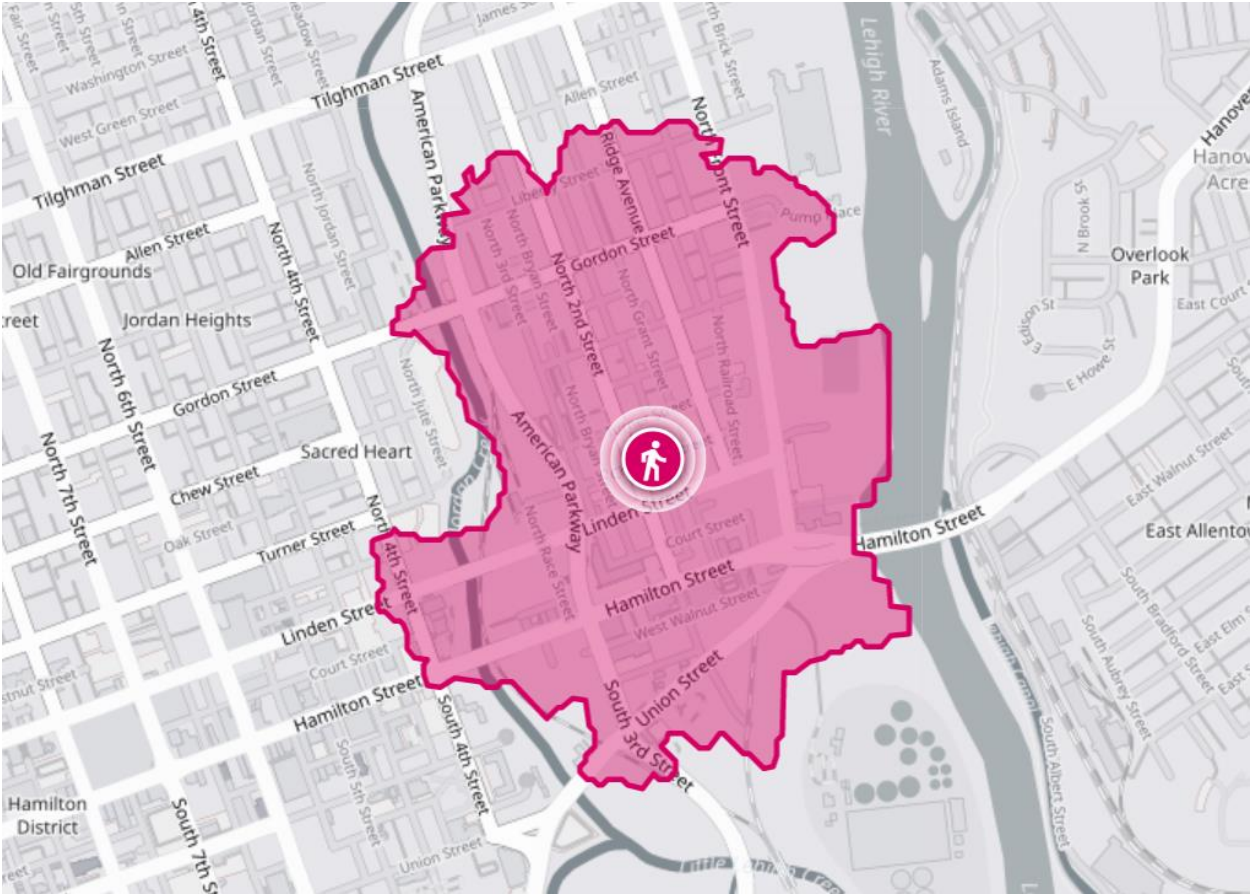
There is one park within a 10-minute walking distance of Dieruff High School: Andre Reed Park

Percent Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

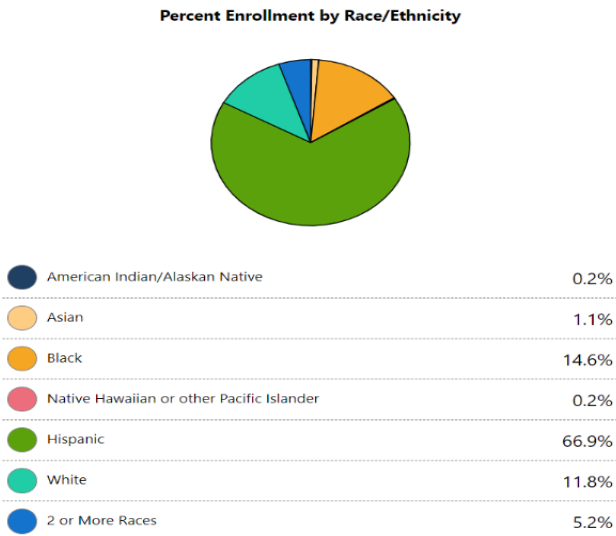


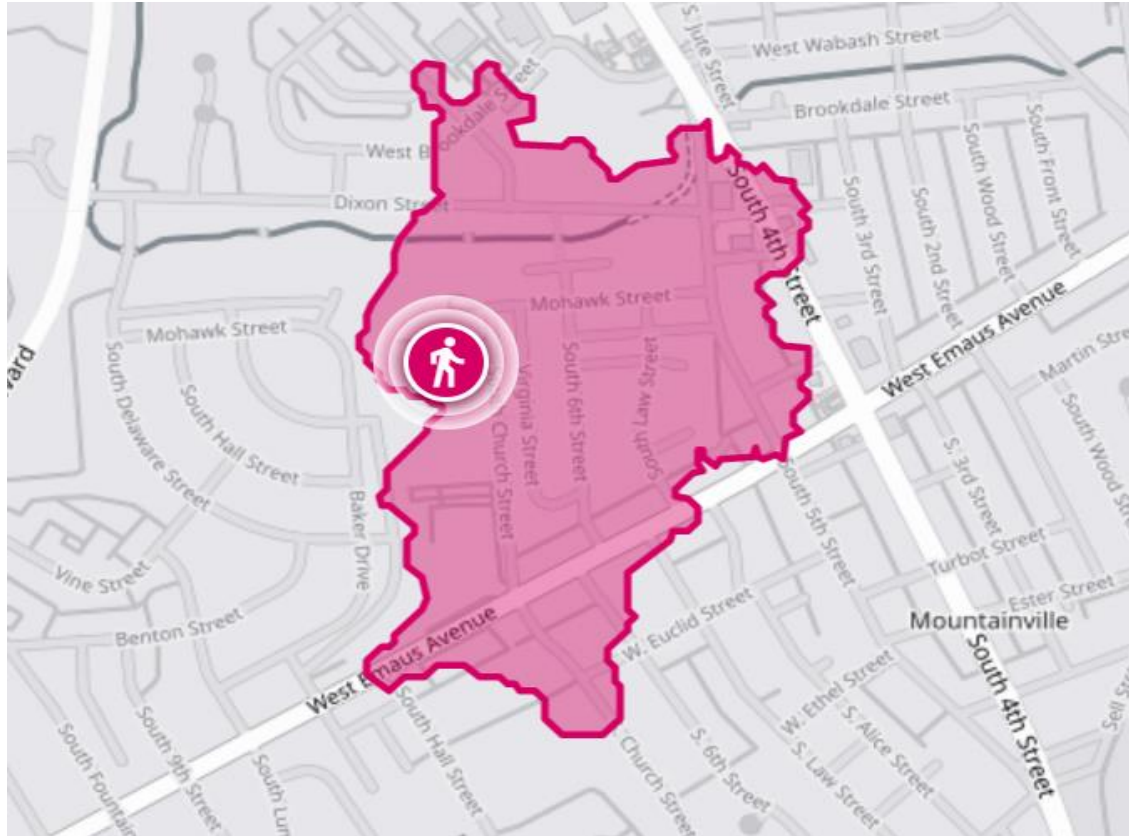
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.2%
Asian	1.3%
Black	11.9%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.1%
Hispanic	74.0%
White	11.5%
2 or More Races	1.2%

Harrison-Morton Middle School:

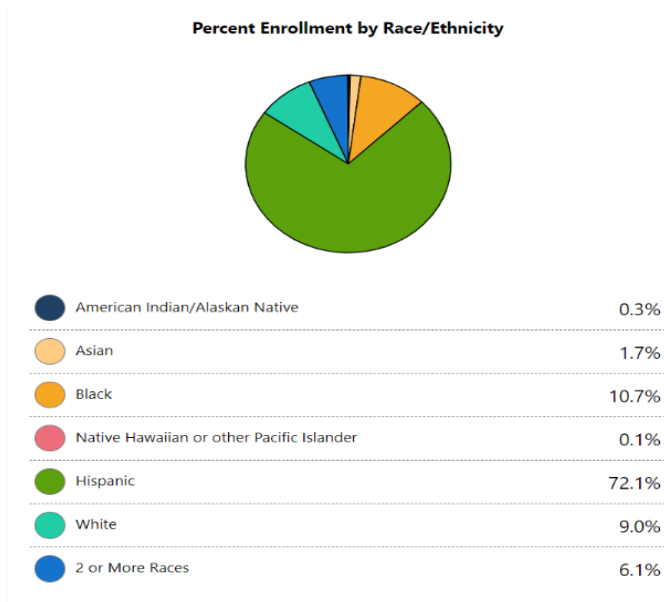


There are two parks within a 10-minute walking distance of Harrison-Morton Middle School:
Jordan Meadows and Bucky Boyle Park.

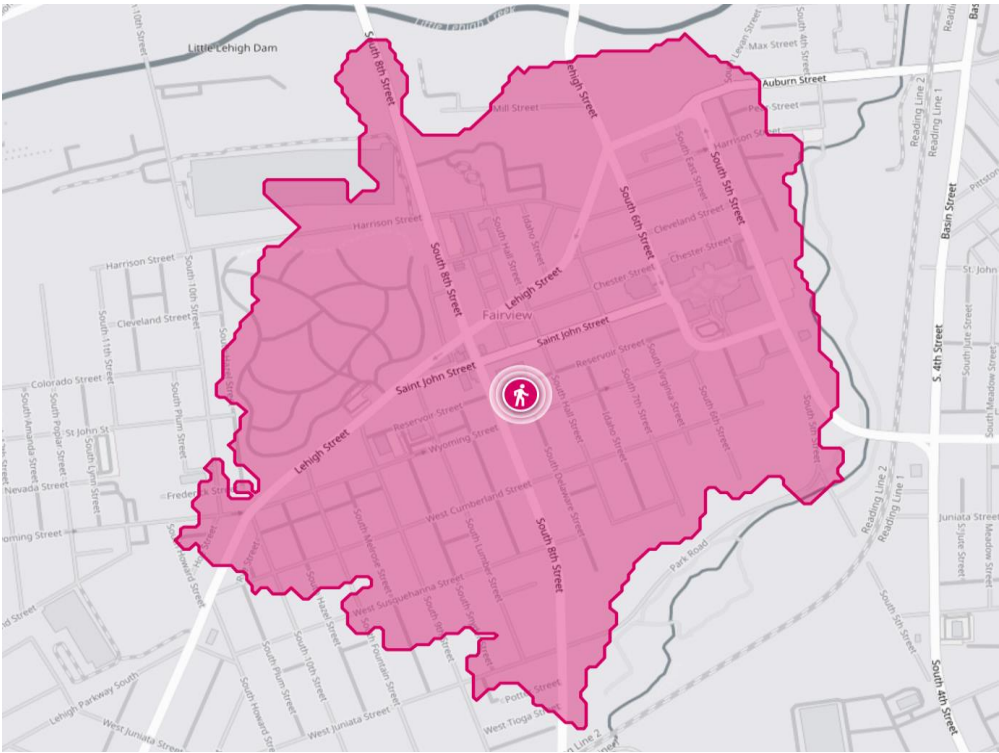


Hiram W. Dodd Elementary School

There is one park within a 10-minute walking distance of Hiram Dodd Elementary School: Trout Creek Parkway.

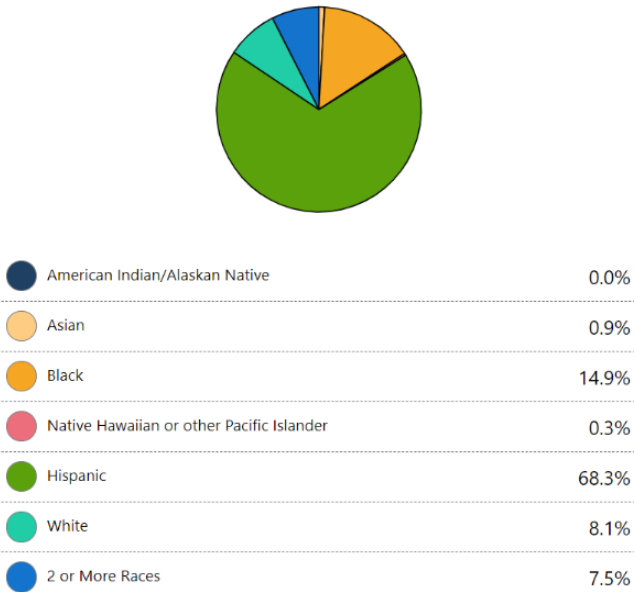


Jefferson Elementary

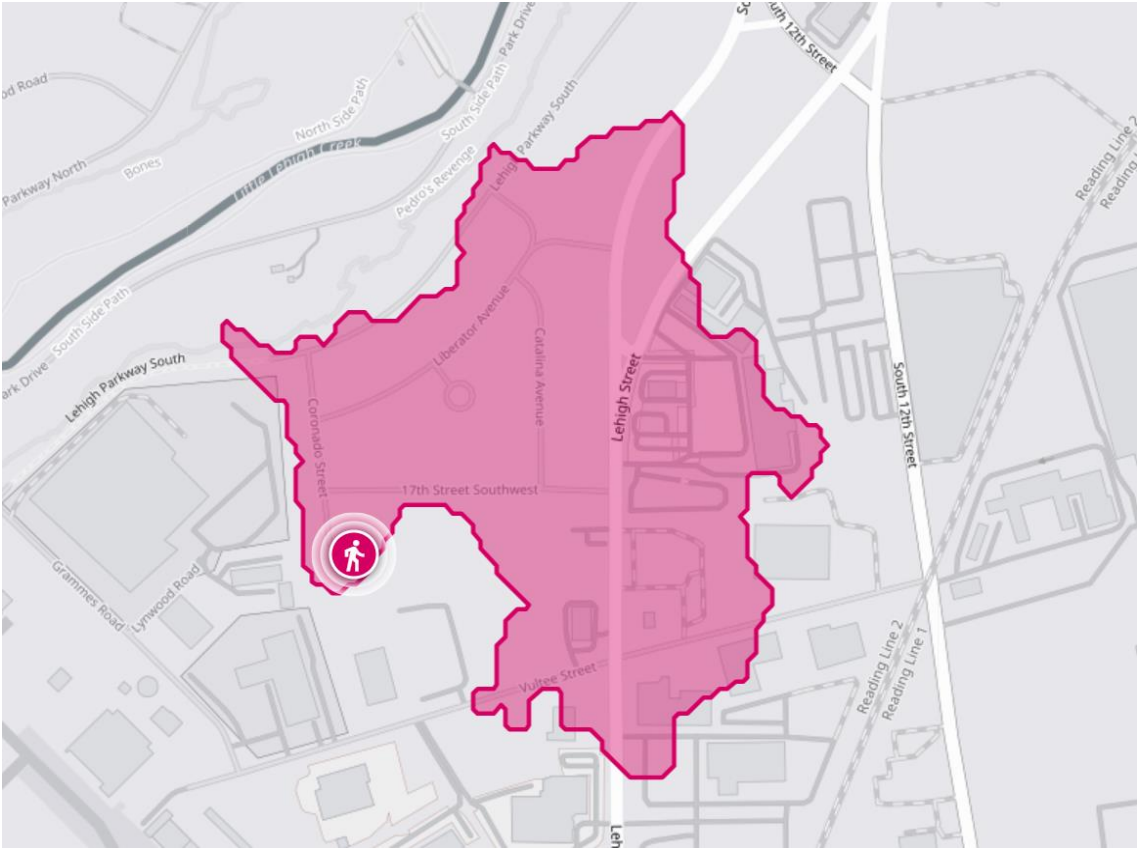


There is one park within a 10-minute walking distance of Jefferson Elementary School: Trout Creek Parkway.

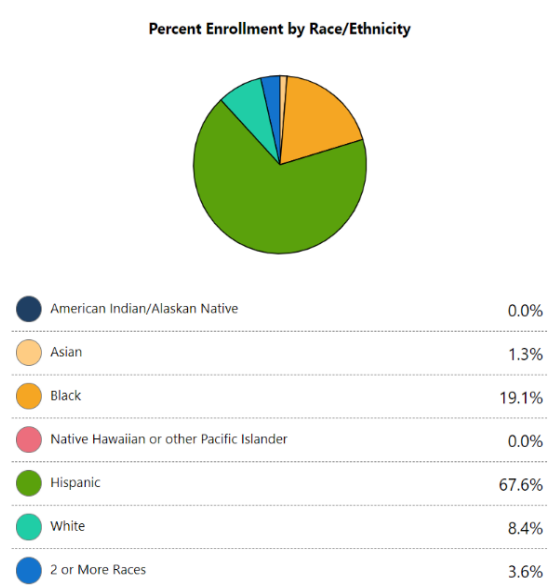
Percent Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



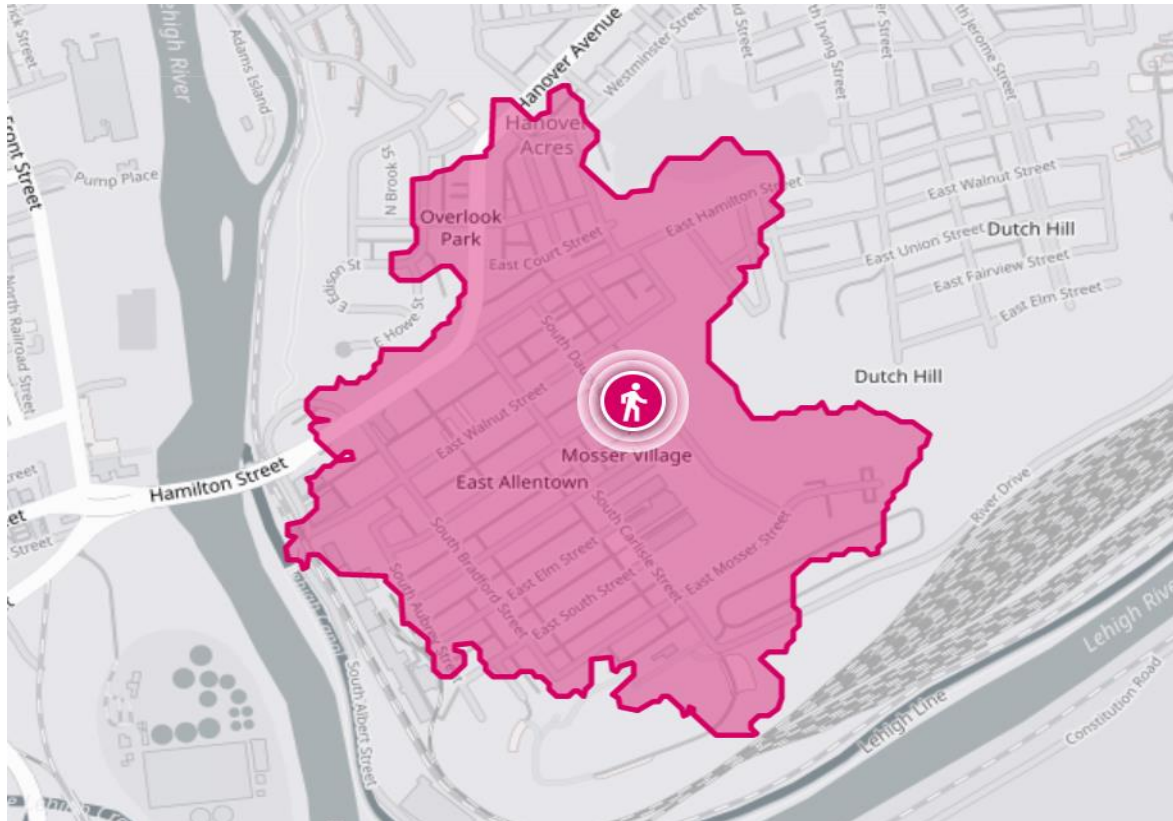
Lehigh Parkway Elementary:



There is one park that is within a 10-minute walking distance of Lehigh Parkway Elementary School: Little Lehigh Parkway.



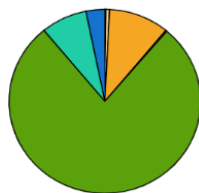
Mosser Elementary School:



There are two greenspaces within a 10-minute walking distance of Mosser Elementary School:

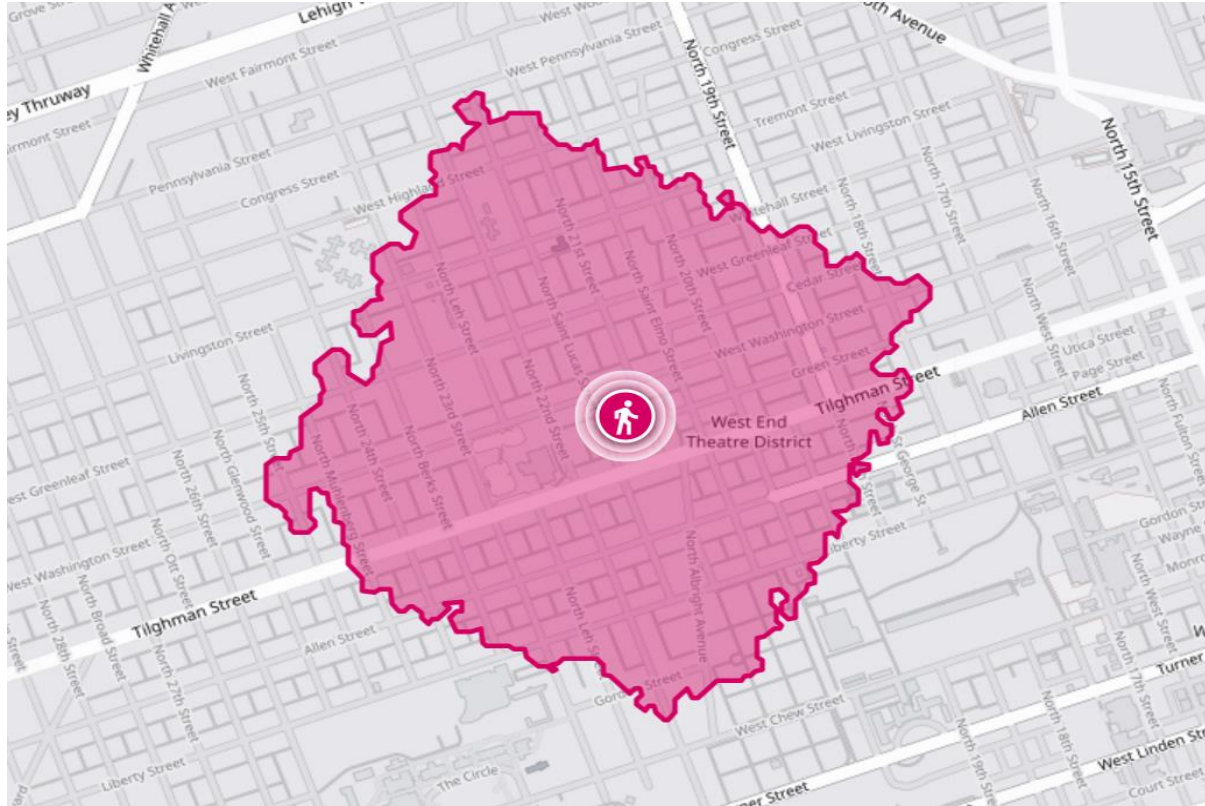
Keck Park and East Side Reservoir (greenspace on site).

Percent Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



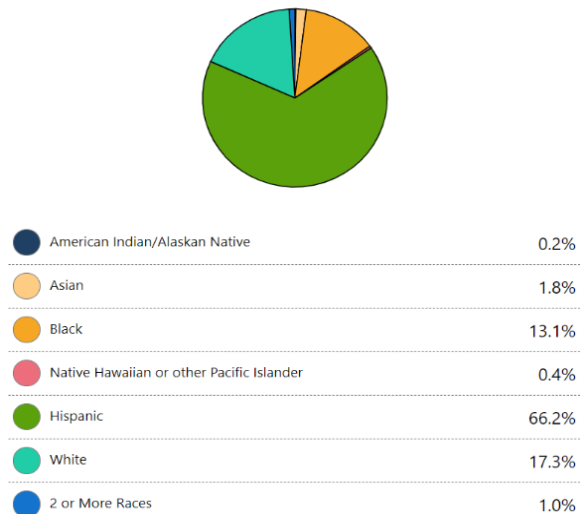
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.2%
Asian	0.6%
Black	10.2%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.2%
Hispanic	77.9%
White	7.8%
2 or More Races	3.2%

Muhlenberg Elementary School:

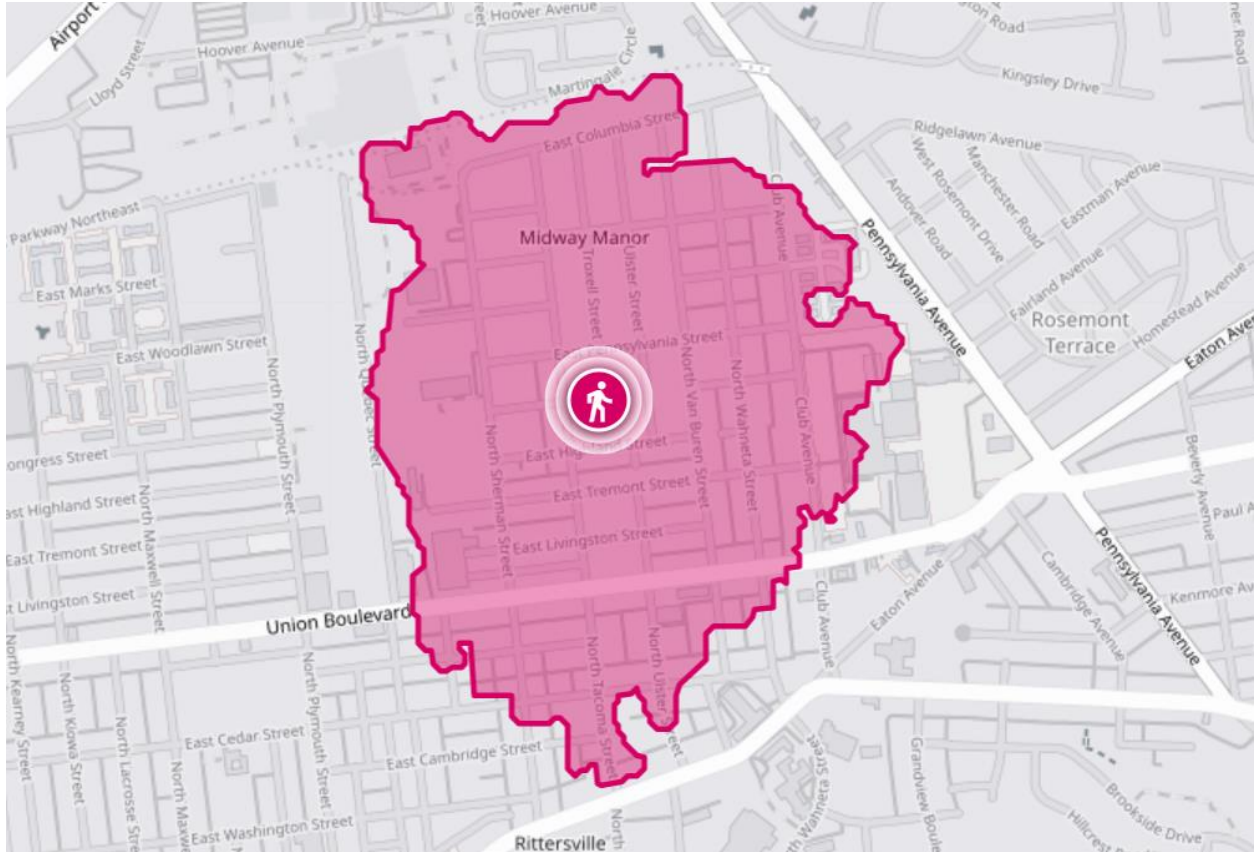


There are no parks within a 10-minute walking distance of Muhlenberg Elementary School (greenspace on site).

Percent Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



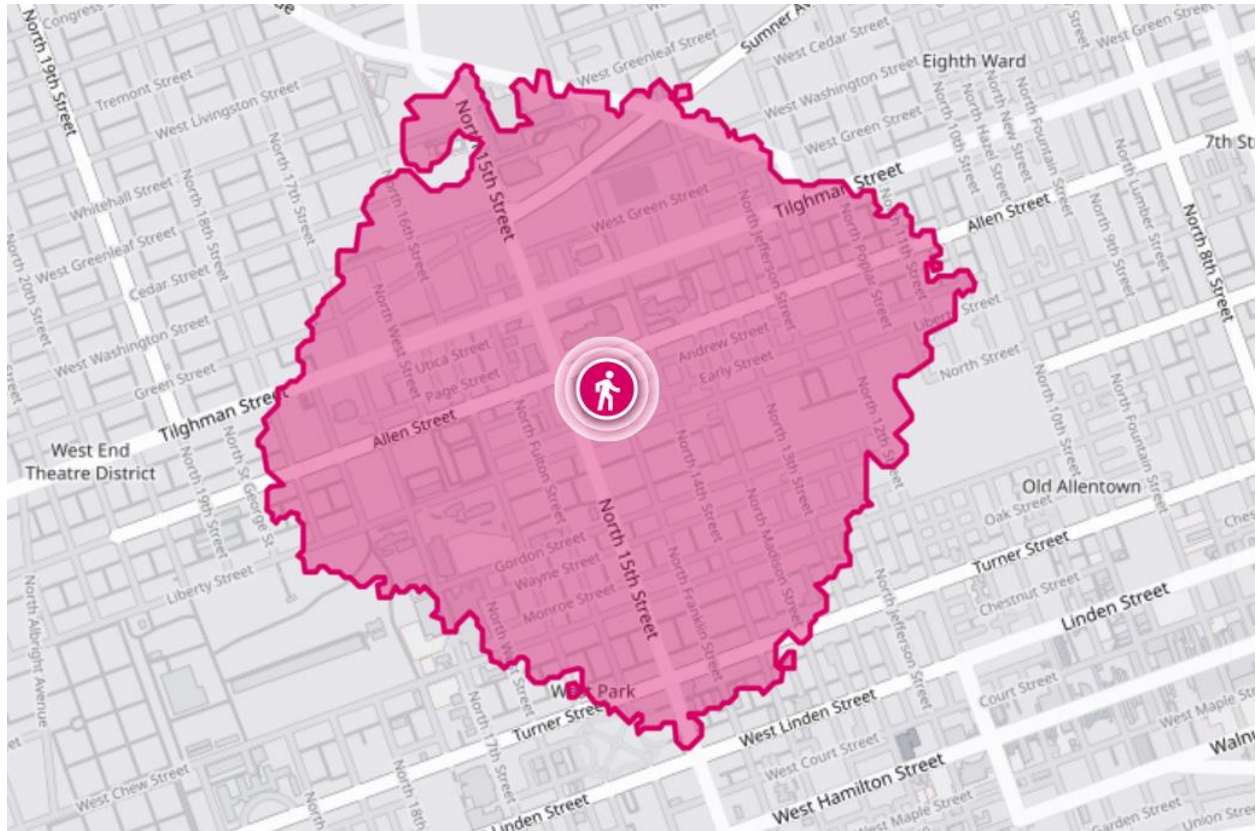
Newcomer Academy:



There are no parks within a 10-minute walking distance of Newcomer Academy (greenspace on site).

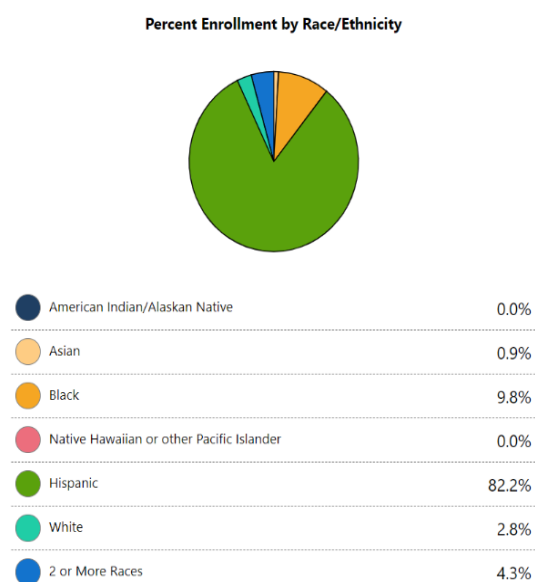
The demographic data for Newcomer Academy changes depending on how long the students remain in the program before returning to their home school.

Ramos Elementary School:

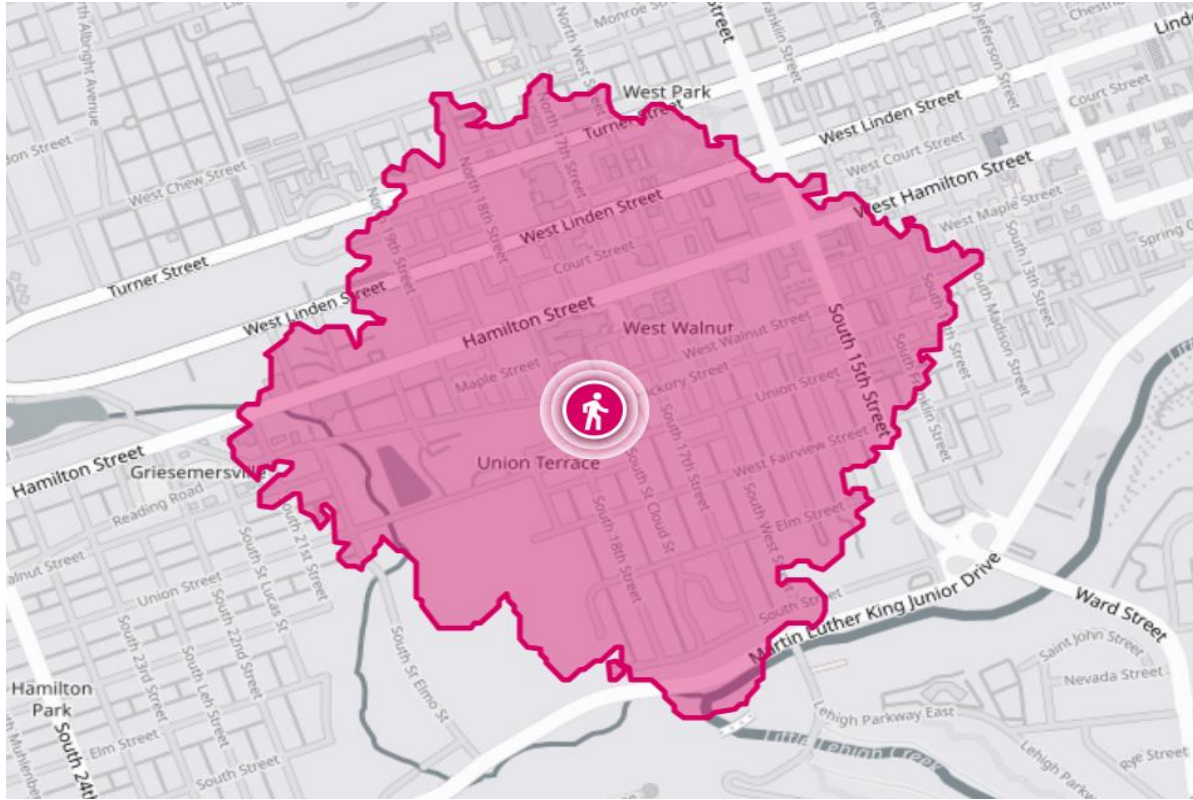


There is one park within a 10-minute walking distance of Ramos Elementary School: Franklin

Park (greenspace on site)

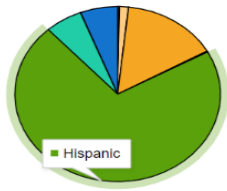


Raub Middle School:



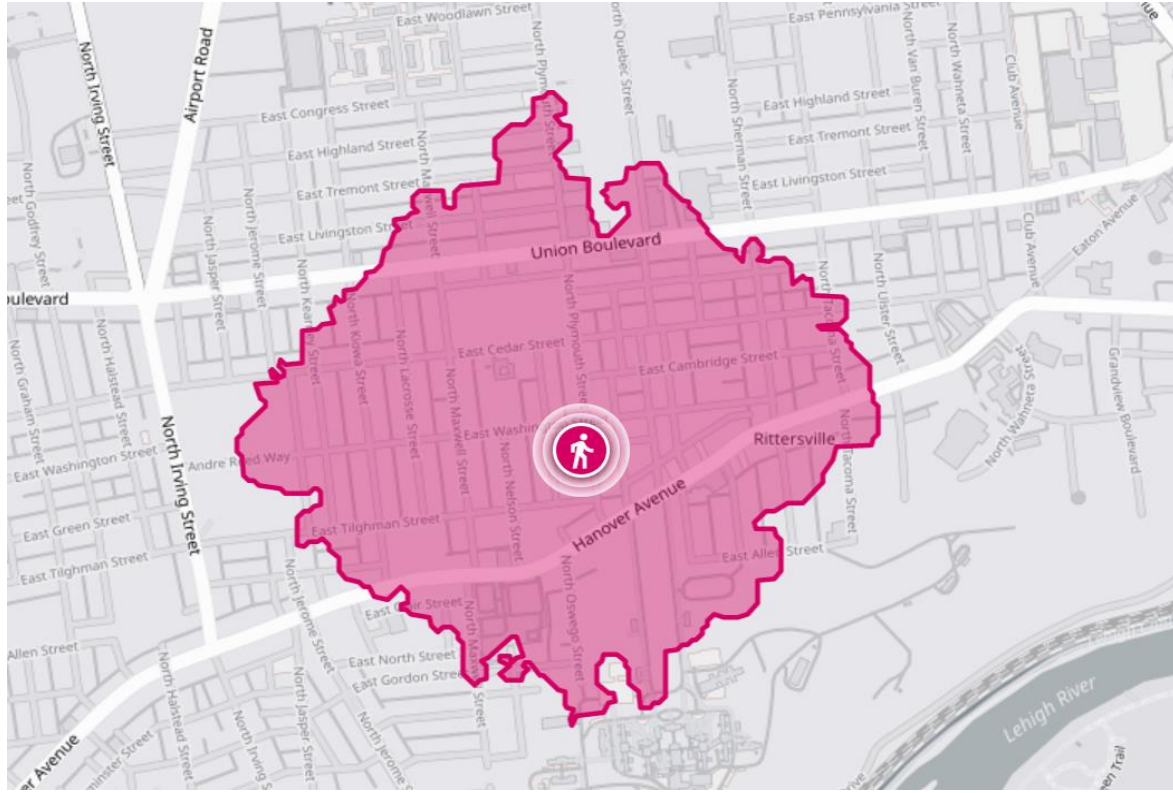
There are four parks within a 10-minute walking distance of Raub Middle School: Cedar Creek Parkway, Joseph S. Daddona Lake and Terrace, Little Lehigh Parkway, and West Park.

Percent Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



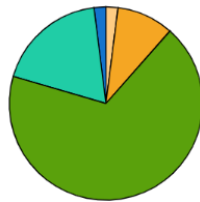
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.3%
Asian	1.4%
Black	15.1%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.2%
Hispanic	71.2%
White	5.9%
2 or More Races	5.9%

Ritter Elementary School:



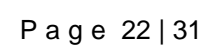
There is one park within a 10-minute walking distance of Ritter Elementary School: Andre Reed Park.

Percent Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

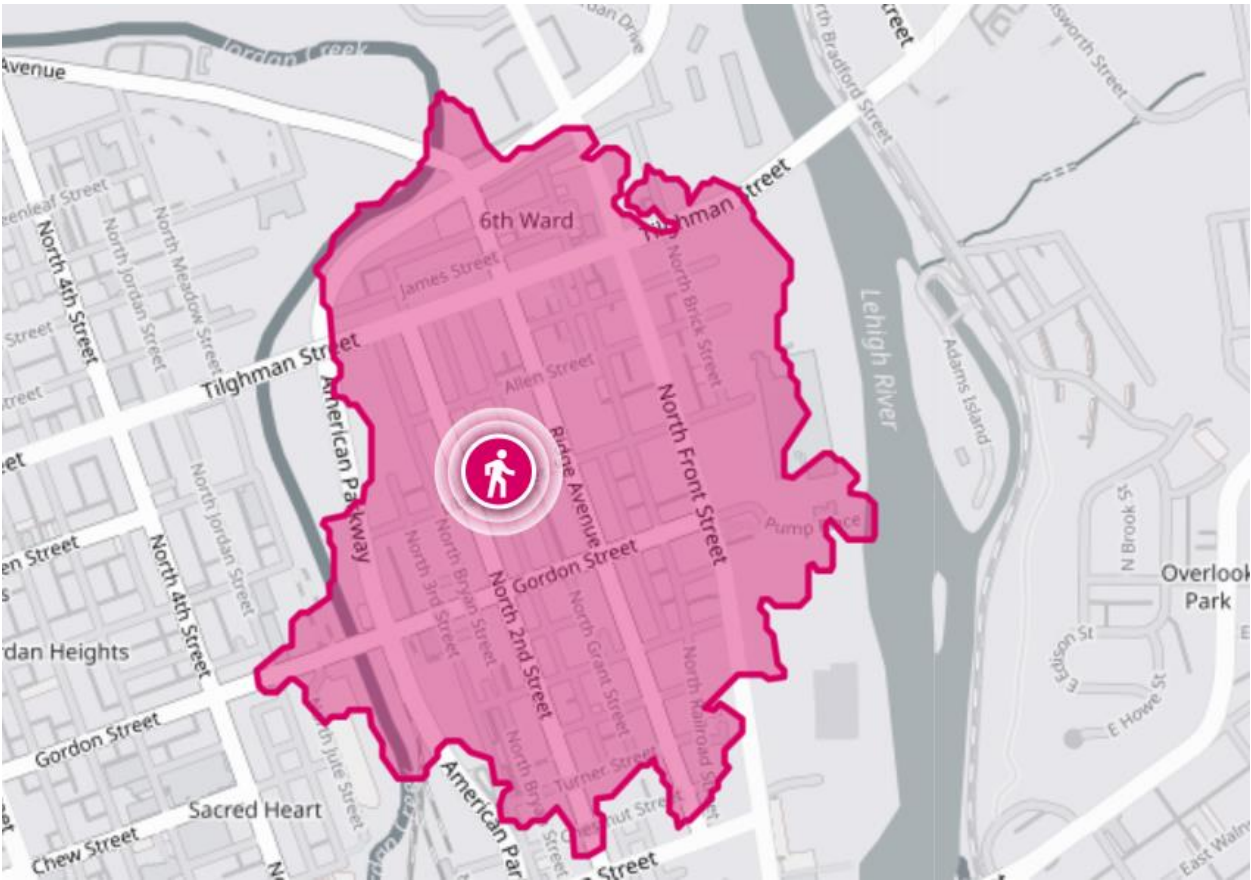


American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.0%
Asian	2.0%
Black	9.5%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.0%
Hispanic	68.1%
White	18.5%
2 or More Races	2.0%

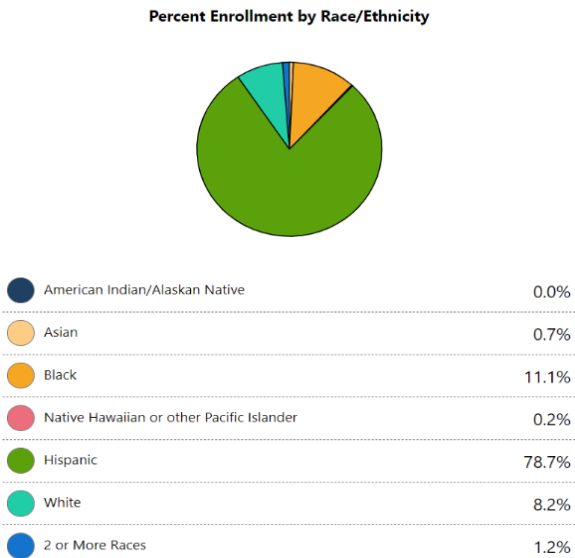
Roosevelt Park and Trout Creek Parkway.



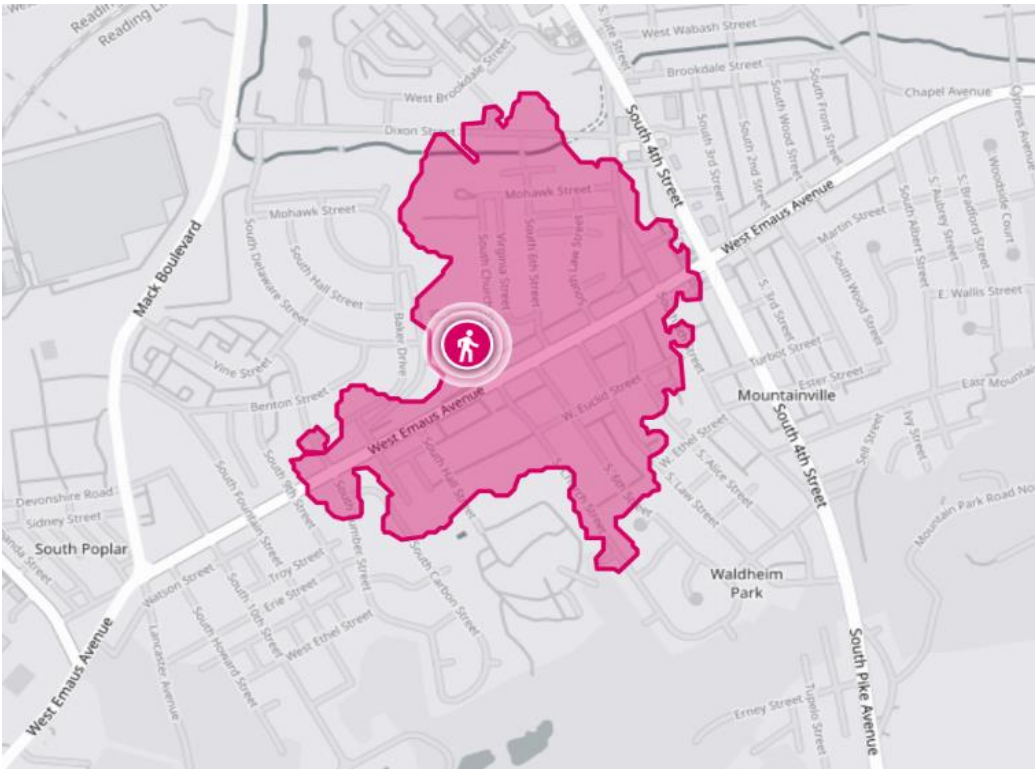
Sheridan Elementary School:



There are two parks within a 10-minute walking distance of Sheridan Elementary School: Bucky Boyle Park and Jordan Meadows.



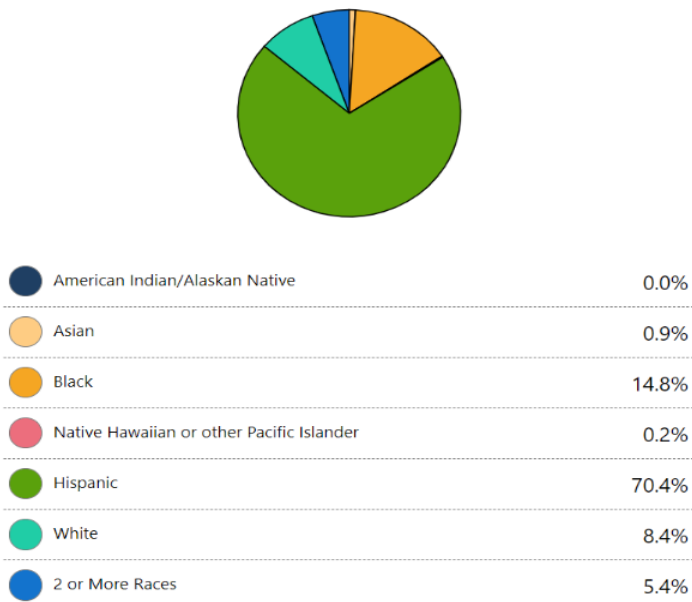
South Mountain Middle School:



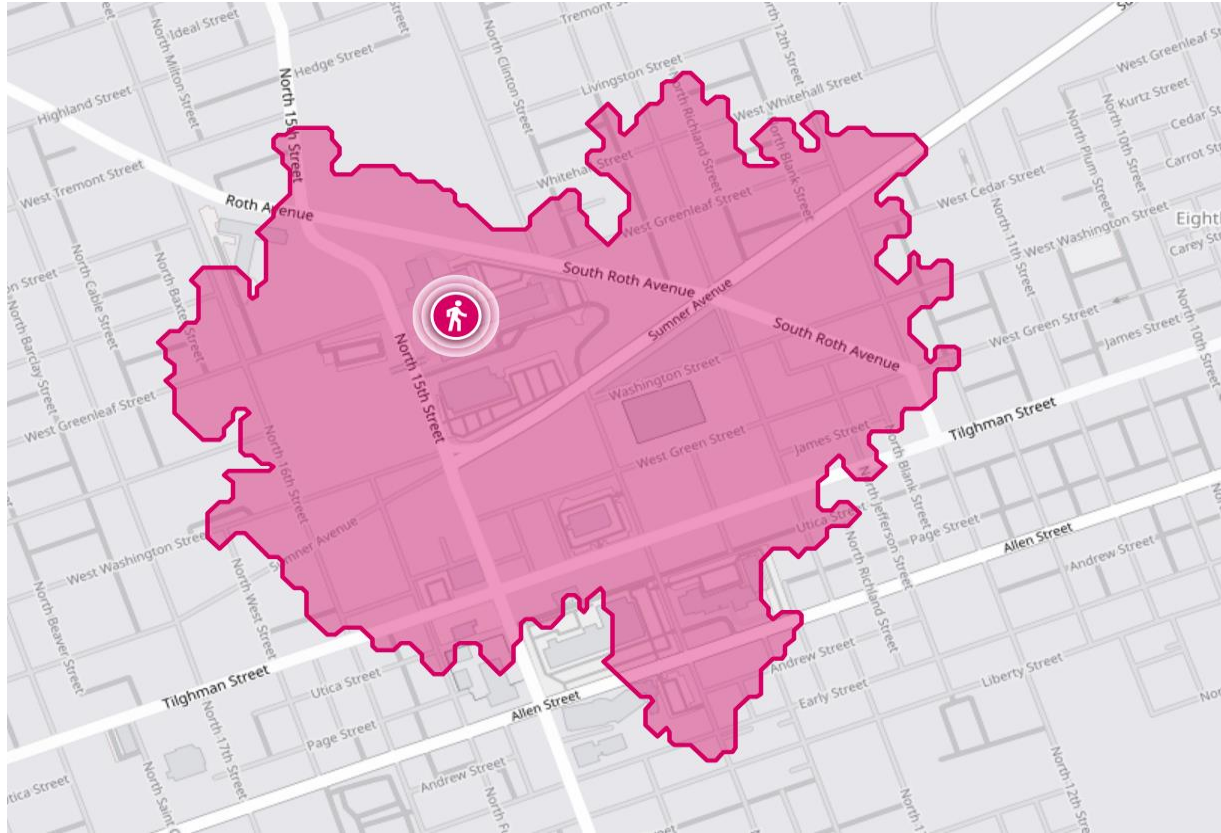
There are two parks within a 10-minute walking distance of South Mountain Middle School:

Trout Creek Park and Lumber and Benton Playlot.

Percent Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

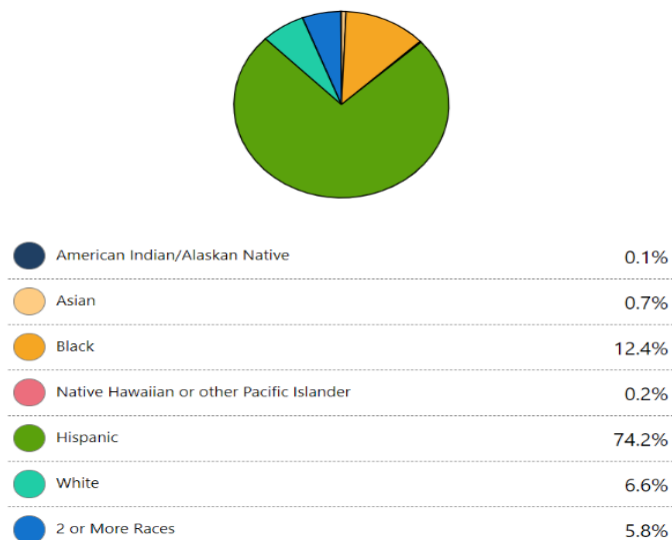


Trexler Middle School:

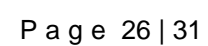


There are no parks within a 10-minute walking distance of Trexler Middle School (greenspace on site).

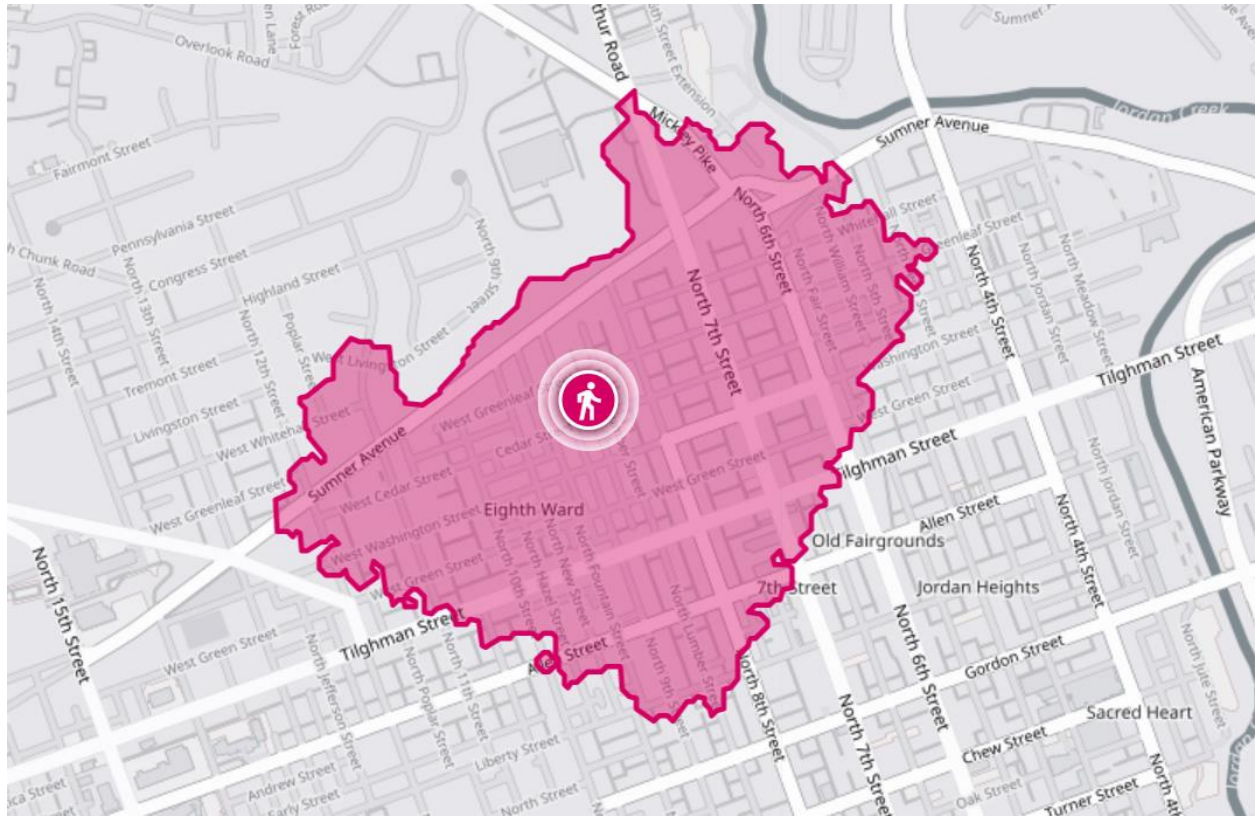
Percent Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



Cedar Creek Parkway, Joseph S. Daddona Lake and Terrace, Little Lehigh Parkway.

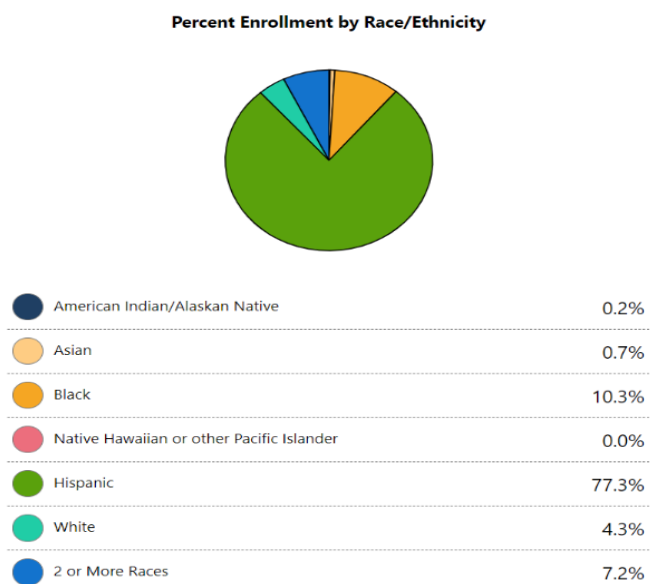


Washington Elementary:

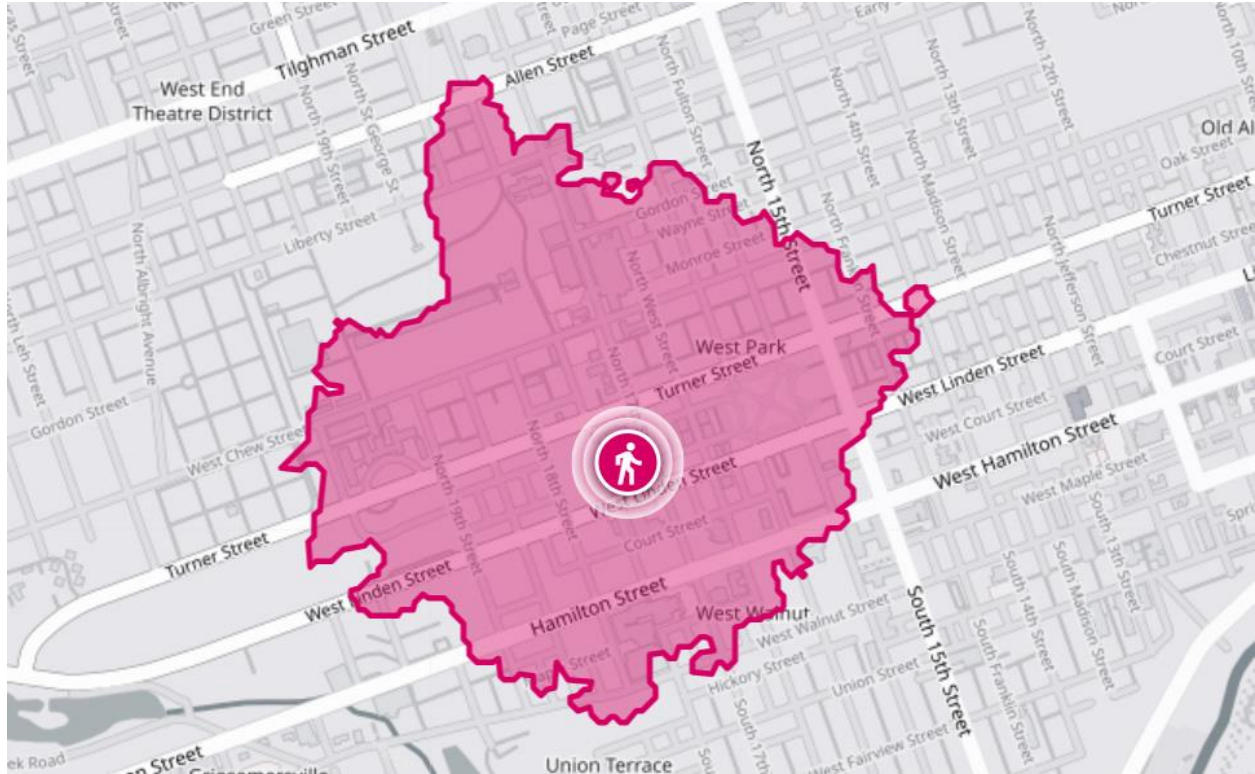


There are two parks within a 10-minute walking distance of Washington Elementary School:

Jordan Park and Stevens Park.

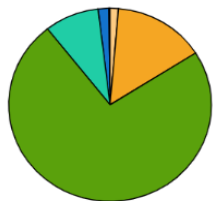


William Allen High School:



There are two parks within a 10-minute walk of William Allen High School: West Park and Cedar Creek Parkway.

Percent Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.1%
Asian	1.3%
Black	14.7%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.1%
Hispanic	73.4%
White	8.7%
2 or More Races	1.7%

Environmental Justice Analysis of Maps:

Each school within Allentown has at least one park within a 10-minute walking distance with exception of Central Elementary School, Muhlenberg Elementary School, Newcomer Academy, and Trexler Middle School. Muhlenberg Elementary School, Newcomer Academy, and Trexler Middle School all have greenspaces on site. The only school without a park or greenspace within a ten-minute walking distance is Central Elementary School, which has a 75% Hispanic enrollment rate.

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