City of Cleveland Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights

Ensuring Safe and Frequent access to nature for all children, their families and the community in the city of Cleveland.

Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights - Preamble

Whereas: Studies show that children who learn and play in nature are healthier, happier and perform better in school.

Whereas: Children who have safe access to parks, zoos, nature centers, lakes and rivers, and other public outdoor areas are more resilient, more confident, more creative and better problem solvers.

Whereas: Children who develop a positive relationship with nature are more likely to become tomorrow's caretakers of our natural heritage.

Whereas: Children and families will have access to Cleveland's parks, pools, trails, playgrounds and green spaces where they can freely play, feeling safe and secure.

Whereas: Through its parks, trails, lakeshore, green spaces and other outdoor areas, Cleveland provides a wide variety of quality outdoor opportunities for its residents.

Therefore: We adopt this Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights in which every child in Cleveland has the right to:

1. BREATHE FRESH & CLEAN AIR!

Breathing fresh air helps decrease the risk of asthma in children. Less pollution means lowering risks of premature death and other serious health effects.

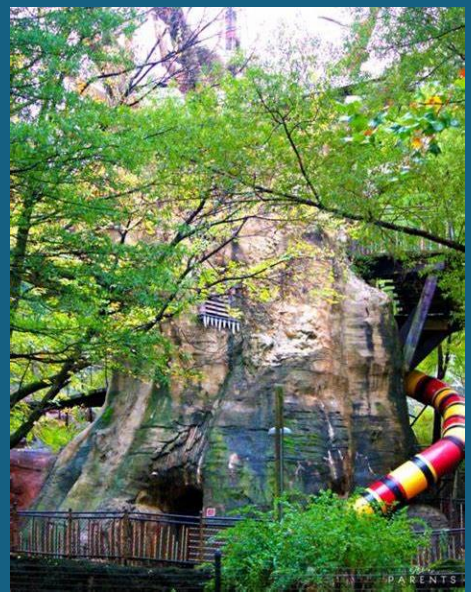
2. Recreate safely on the beaches and in the waters of Lake Erie.

We need safe and accessible water for children, their friends and their families.

3. Play in clean parks, greenspaces, rivers, and streams.

Clean parks, green spaces, and rivers give kids a place to run, explore, and grow stronger.

When children connect with nature, they stay active, reduce stress, and develop creativity, leading to a healthier, happier future.



4. Bike on safe trails in parks that connect community.

- **Road and greenspace safe biking pathways and trails are essential for children and adults of all ages.**

- Installing railings and regular maintenance on concrete will help keep biking youth safe while they ride.

- Accessible parks with walk and bike paths for all gender, age, beliefs will encourage healthy outdoor activities like biking for everyone.

5. Hike and explore safely in nature.

- **In Cleveland, children have the right to access safe outdoor spaces and experience nature, which is crucial for their physical and emotional development.**
- Protecting these rights ensures that every child has opportunities for learning, recreation, and personal growth in a healthy environment.

Cleveland’s current tree canopy is extremely depleted. A tree canopy of at least 30% is critical for human and ecosystem health. The city has an average of 18%, but some neighborhoods have a canopy cover of as low as 4.2%. Trees cool streets, manage stormwater, clean the air and have been shown to increase mental wellness and decrease community violence.

6. Walk along tree-lined streets in their neighborhood.

Children walking on residential and urban streets with a dense and diverse tree canopy, not only are living in a healthier environment but, whether they are in parks, or in their neighborhoods, nature is present and abundant.

7. Play in the snow, build a snowman, ride a sled, throw a snowball.

Children deserve to have the ability to thrive in any weather.

Building snowmen and having snowball fights are important memories to have, but how will it be safe for them in an unhealthy environment?

It is important to keep our grounds clean; picking up garbage, cleaning up your dog's waste, and taking other important actions to keep our neighborhood suitable for the younger generation. It is important for children to be able to build these skills, have new experiences and have fun!

This brings the community together by creating a healthier environment and new bonding experiences for us all.

8 Dig in soil, plant and nurture a seed, watch it grow.

- **Planting seeds fosters a connection to nature and teaches patience, responsibility, and care for the environment.**
- Children have the right to experience the wonder of nurturing life from the ground up.
- Watching a seed grow into a plant is a powerful reminder of the role we play in sustaining our world.

9 Engage and connect with their community at events in parks and greenspaces.

- **Bringing the community together, creates new bonds with your local and extended neighbors, and strengthens existing connections.**
- Encouraging time outdoors, breathing fresh air and enjoying the weather, has physical and mental health benefits.
- Activating green spaces with meaningful events, helps everyone more deeply connect with nature.

10. Bond with family and friends over an outdoor meal.

- **Fresh air and nature brings a calming atmosphere that creates a welcoming space to share stories and laughter.**
- Sharing cooking tasks makes the meal feel collaborative and inclusive.
- Along with great food you get to enjoy games in the park like frisbee, volleyball, football or cornhole.

11. Watch the stars shine bright during a peaceful night of camping.

- **Spending time outdoors at night allows us to enjoy the nature that we cannot always see and hear.**
- Enjoying the night skies with a clear view of the stars, allows us to see the billions of stars that can be seen with the human eye, especially with minimal light pollution.
- Camping connects you with nature and one another both day and night.

12. Learn in nature, building confidence to be stewards of our natural world.

- **Spending time outside exploring and learning about the nature surrounding us, helps children to recognize the things that nature has to offer and the importance of a healthy natural world.**

- Educational experiences in natural spaces help us embrace the beauty of the world instilling both understanding and curiosity to build commitment to our environment.

Thank you for allowing us to present the proposed Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights for the city of Cleveland.

We would like to also thank our colleagues at Western Reserve Land Conservancy, Children and Nature Network, National League of Cities, the Mayor's Office and Council members Brian Kazy and Stephanie Howse-Jones.

We now invite any questions or comments from Council.