



# How to End The Adventure Gap

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Creating new customers,  
employees, and stewards  
for the great outdoors

RCP Network Gathering 2024

Location: Waitts Mountain, Malden MA

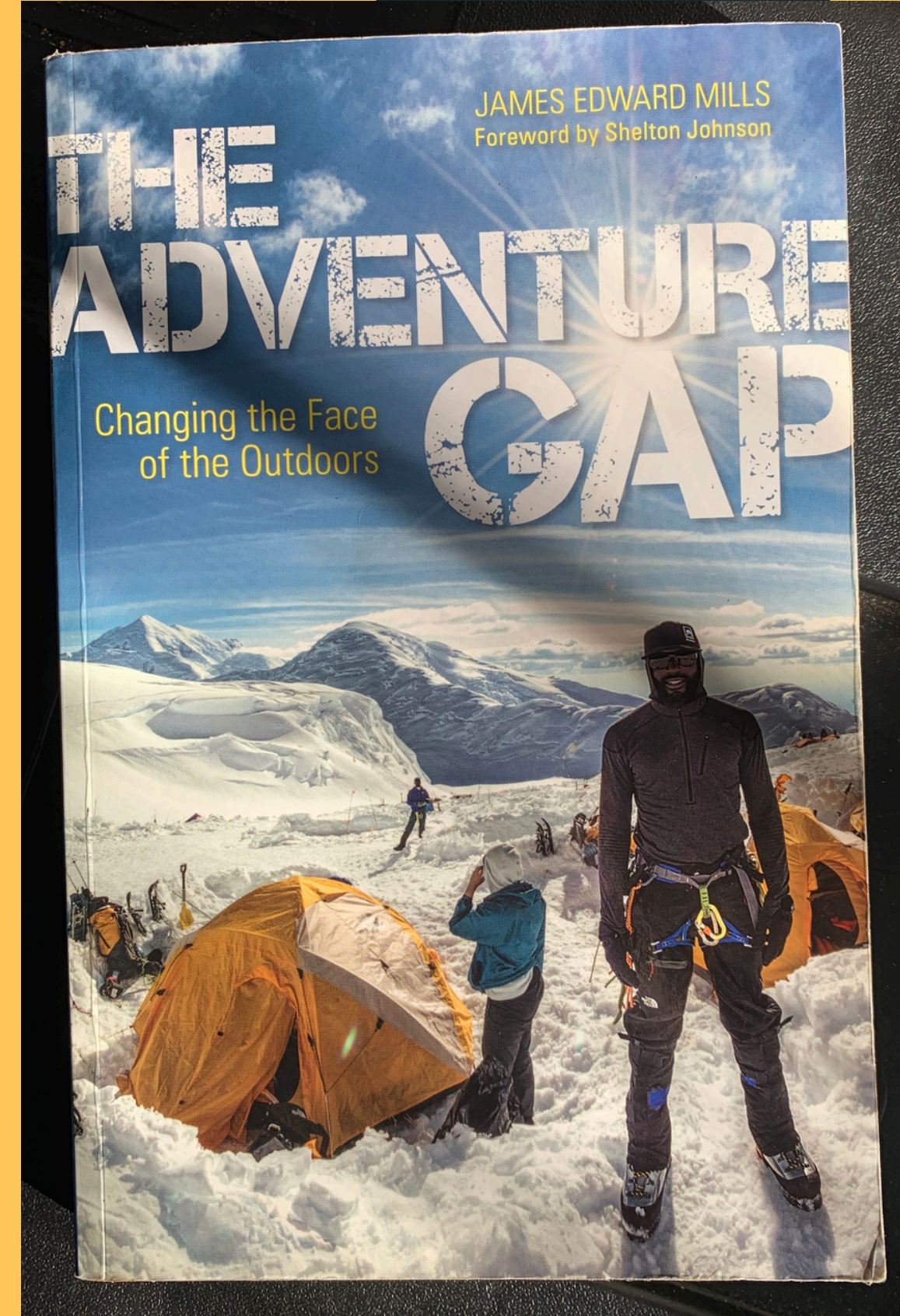




# What is The Adventure Gap?

The difference between a community's percentage of the US population and its percentage of participation in outdoor recreation as well as the understanding of barriers to participation for these same groups.

Coined by author and historian, James Edward Mills in 2014.





# Why is The Adventure Gap relevant to everyone in this room?

A 2016 interview with, James Edward Mills in *Alpinist Magazine*:

“The reality is that if you have a constituency of voters who have no direct relationship with the natural world, why would they ever vote to allocate federal tax dollars to support it in perpetuity the way it is now? I really think that if we can increase the diversity of outdoor recreation and of people who participate in adventure sports, we can ultimately protect and preserve our National Park systems, our wild and scenic places, and our natural resources for another 1,000 years.”

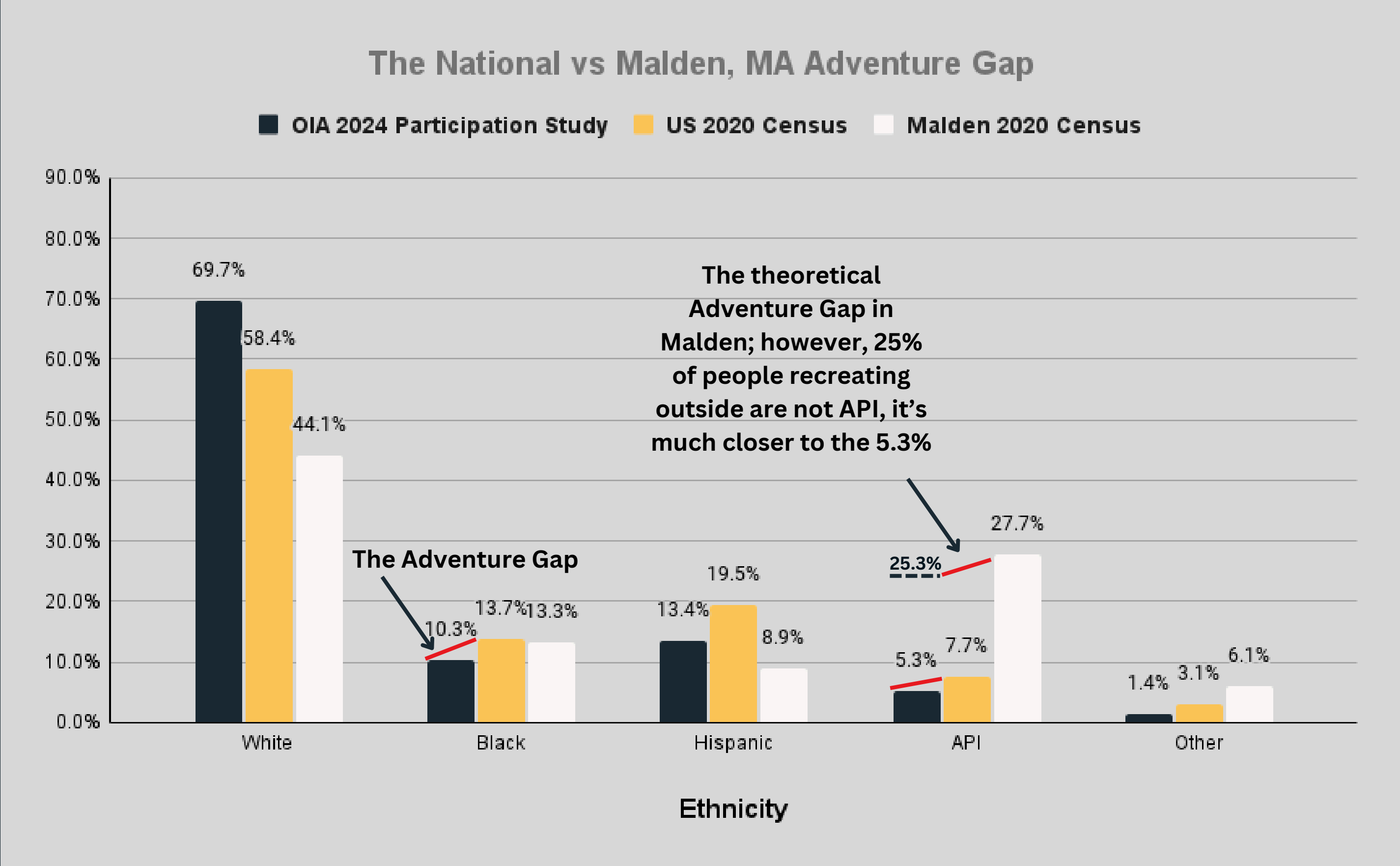
Location: Waitts Mountain, Malden MA



# The Adventure Gap with Data

In both my research and observation, as a Malden resident since 2017 and core outdoor enthusiast, The Adventure Gap is even more extreme in diverse communities like Malden than more homogeneous ones.

Malden's trails, waterways, and crags look nothing like the Stop & Shop downtown.



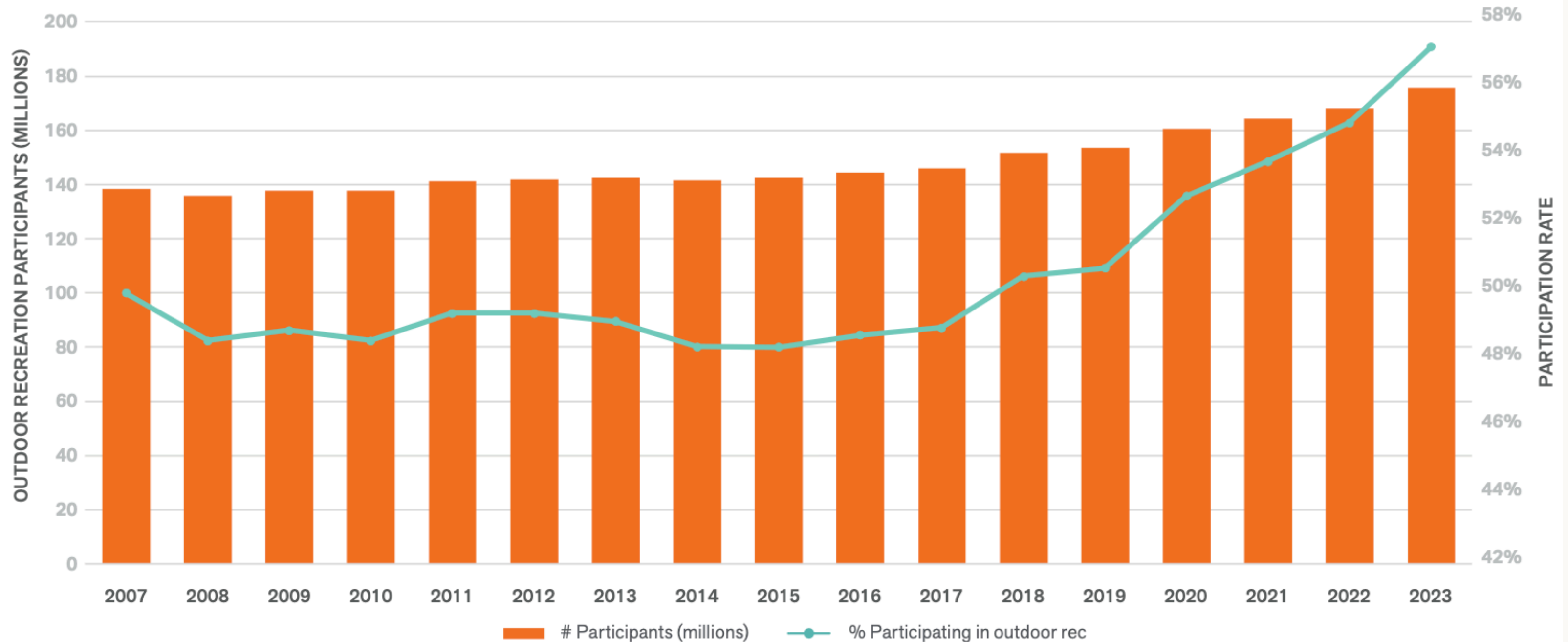
Data provided by the [Outdoor Industry Association Participation Report 2024](#) and US Census 2020.

**Outdoor Recreation** = Any leisure or recreational activity that takes place in natural environments or outdoor settings.  
**Participant** = A survey respondent who reported participating in at least one outdoor activity in a year.  
**Core Participant** = A person who takes part in outdoor activities 51 times or more per year.





# OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPANT COUNT AND PARTICIPATION RATE 2007 TO 2023



Data provided by the Outdoor Industry Association Participation Report 2024.

## More Data

Overall participation continues to increase amongst the US population since the start of the pandemic yet The Adventure Gap remains the same for all ethnicities.

57.3% of Americans participated in outdoor recreation last year, so who are 42.7%, where are they, and how do we get them outside to advocate for solving climate change?





# Who's this guy?



## Darren Josey (DJ)

- Founder & CEO of First Seed Sown
- Creator of The Great Malden Outdoors
- Proud Black & Puerto Rican, dad, husband, surfer, rock climber, hiker, camper, trail runner, angler, and over 40 pickup basketball enthusiast

My 15 year outdoor journey started because my first “real job” was within the Outdoor Industry, Vibram USA, and now its my career, something I pass down to my children, and share with my partner.

“The Adventure Gap gets wider in the boardroom.”



## Resume

### CitySports

Footwear Dept Manager at Boylston Street Boston Store

### Vibram USA

Customer Service, Sales Operations during the FiveFingers revolution

### Topo Athletic

ERP Admin, In House Sales Rep & Key Account Manager, Sales Operations, Grassroots Marketing

### Polartec

North American Marketing Manager, Sales + Marketing for PolarFleece

### NEMO Equipment

VP of Marketing



# Takeaways

Here's what I want you to walk away with from this presentation:

1. An understanding of one potential & comprehensive solution to this problem...apologies in advance, we only have 1 hour
2. Resources for you to make incremental change
3. Take action in prioritizing Environmental Justice Communities / Gateway Cities
4. Hire diverse employees and contractors to do the work



**To solve the climate crisis...**

We need everyone to have a personal connection to nature. For of 2023, 42.7% of American's do not.

**To build a personal connection to nature...**

You need to create local outdoor access.

**To have local outdoor access...**

You need to have programming and resources equitably distributed by a coalition of trusted sources.

**To make this all sustainable...**

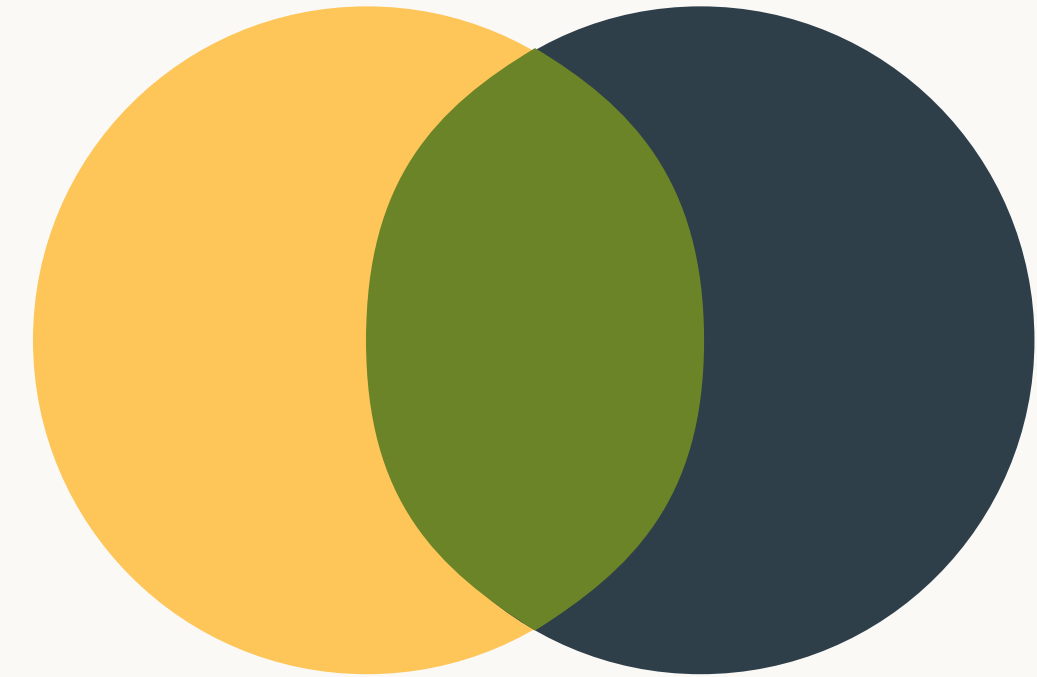
You need build a pathway for that 42.7% of Americans can have a career or be customers of the Outdoor, Recreation, Conservation, or Green Tech Industries.

**Said simply**

Show someone a good time outside, they will fight to protect it. Show them a pathway to a career where they make a living that's connected to being outside and they'll evangelize more than just their immediate community but make a meaningful impact beyond it.

Adventure Gap  
Communities

Environmental Justice  
Communities



# How to end The Adventure Gap

My theory



# A Solution

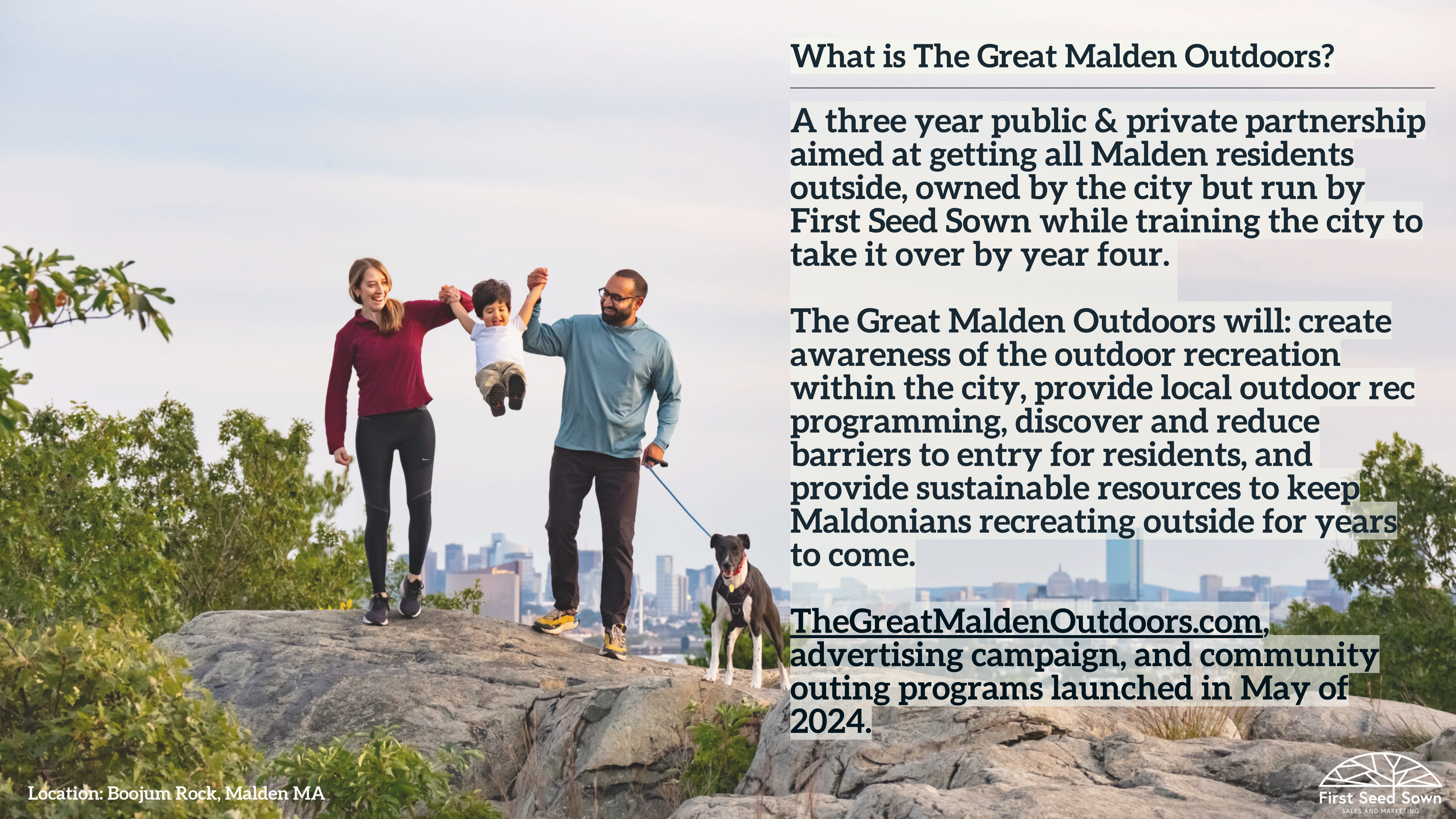


# The Great Malden Outdoors

Location: Northern Strand Trail, Malden MA







## What is The Great Malden Outdoors?

A three year public & private partnership aimed at getting all Malden residents outside, owned by the city but run by First Seed Sown while training the city to take it over by year four.

The Great Malden Outdoors will: create awareness of the outdoor recreation within the city, provide local outdoor rec programming, discover and reduce barriers to entry for residents, and provide sustainable resources to keep Maldonians recreating outside for years to come.

[TheGreatMaldenOutdoors.com](https://TheGreatMaldenOutdoors.com), advertising campaign, and community outing programs launched in May of 2024.



# Awareness



# Resources



The 4 aspects of this campaign brought to life in 2024 to build a personal connection to nature.

# Programming



# Youth Development

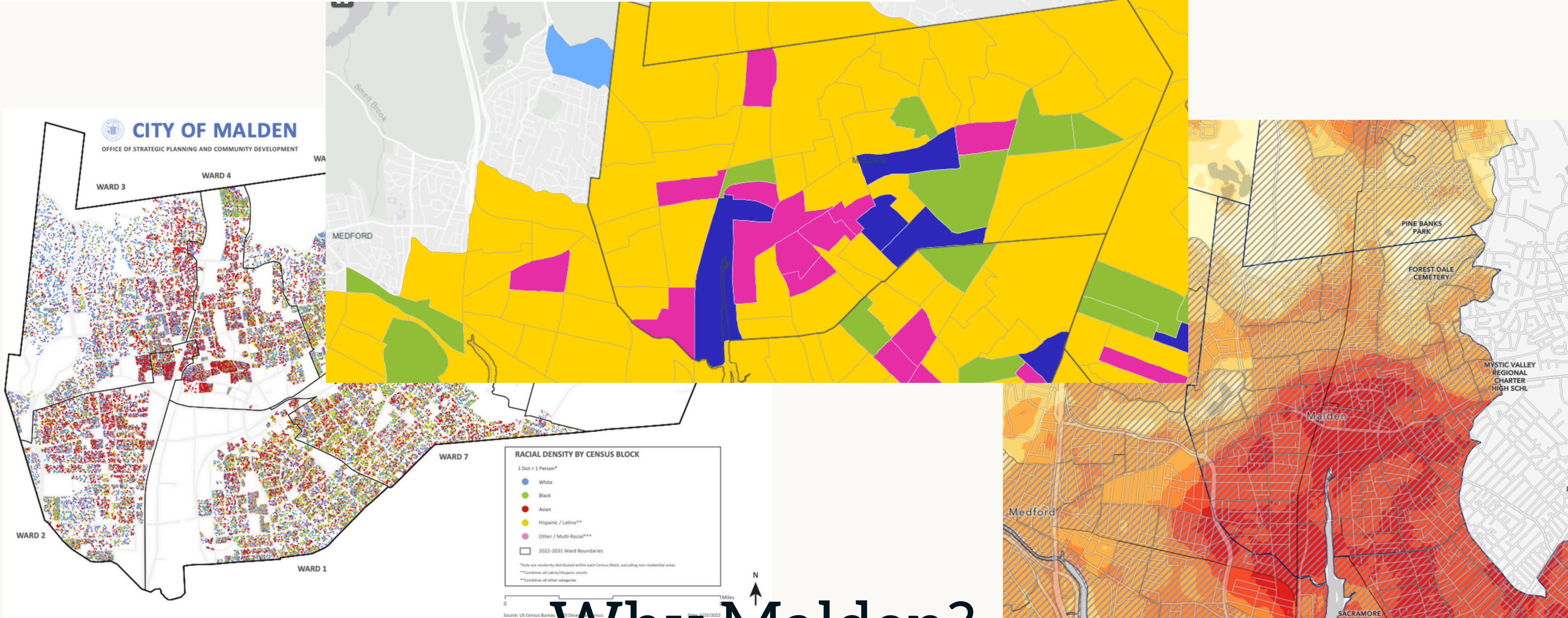




# AN ACT CREATING A NEXT-GENERATION ROADMAP FOR MASSACHUSETTS CLIMATE POLICY.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

[More information about EJ in Massachusetts](#)



## Why Malden?

A 100% Environmental Justice Community with tons access to outdoor recreation within city limits, the best place to end The Adventure Gap



# Environmental Justice = Social Justice

## FROM MA LAW: ROADMAP FOR CLIMATE POLICY

“Environmental justice population”, a neighborhood that meets 1 or more of the following criteria: (i) the annual median household **income is not more than** 65 per cent of the statewide annual median household income; (ii) **minorities comprise 40 per cent** or more of the population; (iii) 25 per cent or more of households **lack English language proficiency**; or (iv) minorities comprise 25 per cent or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150 per cent of the statewide annual median household income...”

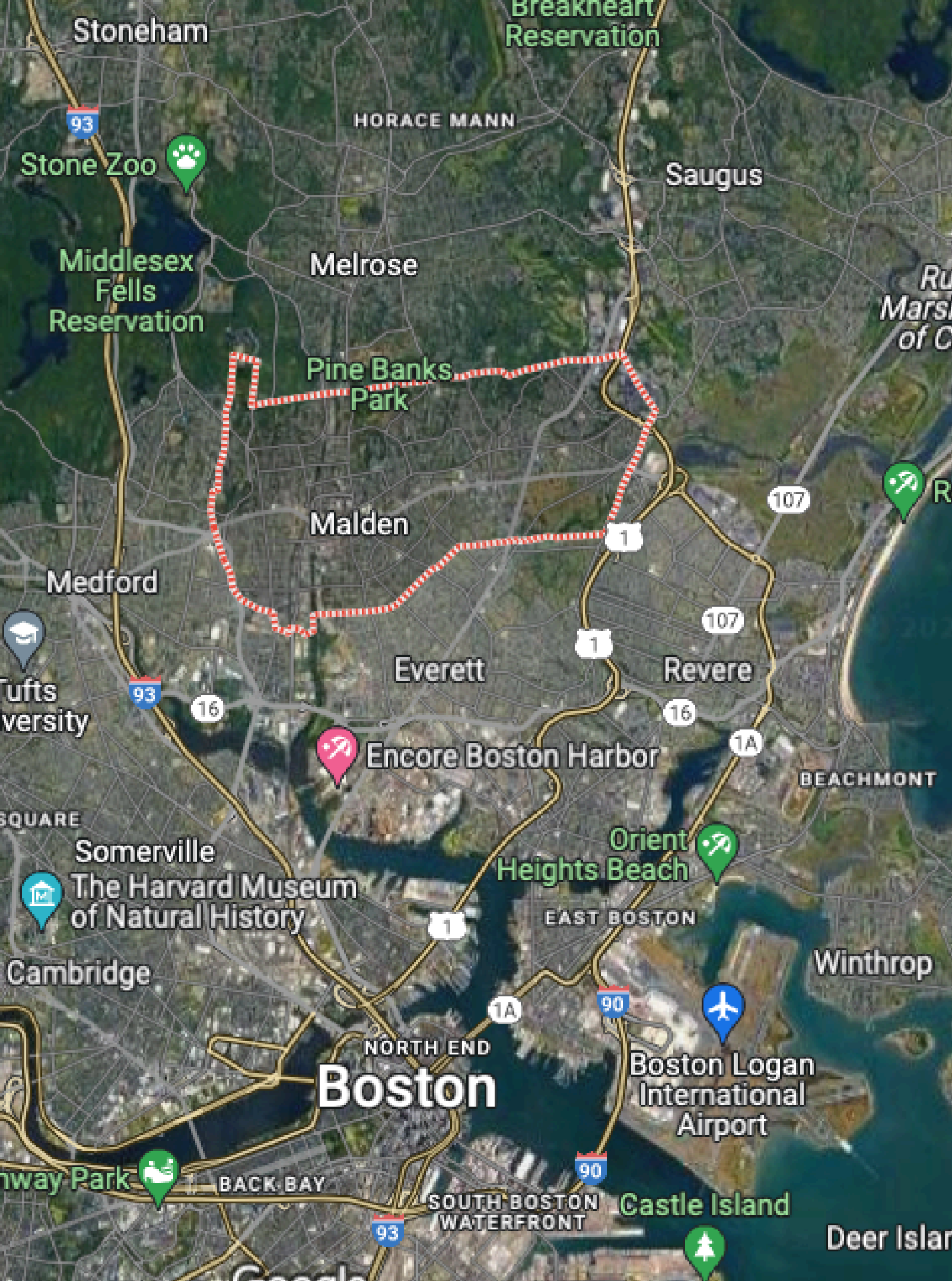
*The populations this law looks to protect are the same for whom an Adventure Gap exists.--DJ*



Location: Greenwood Park, Stoneham MA







# Malden by the Numbers

The #4 most diverse city in the state

A few miles north of Boston, Malden is a majority minority city with 60% of its 65,000 residents being foreign born and / or BIPOC.

- 70% of residents are renters
- 60+ Languages spoken with top 8 required for municipal signage
  - Arabic, Aramaic, English, Simplified Chinese, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Spanish, and Vietnamese
- Malden has two MBTA train stations, numerous bus lines, and is sandwiched by two highways (93 & Route 1)
- Before TGMO, Zero Outdoor Recreation Programs
  - We have Pickleball but not How to Ride a Bicycle
  - 28 million Americans play Basketball but 58 million Hike



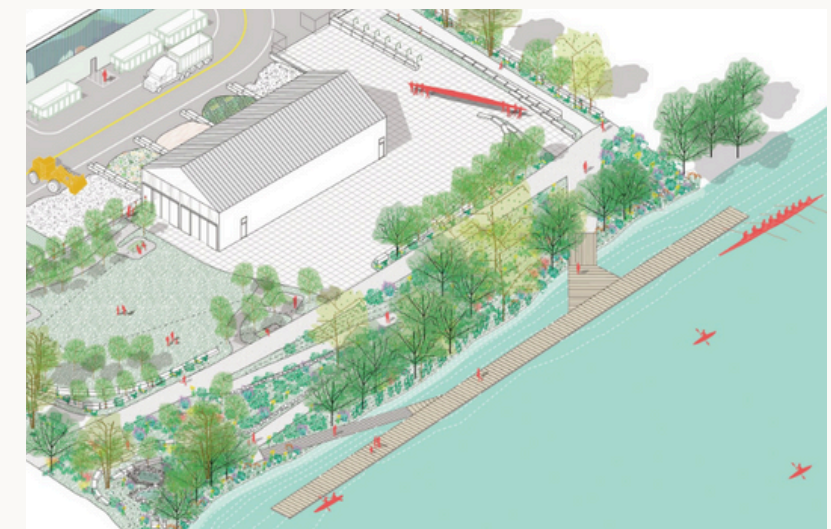


# Outdoor Recreation in the City

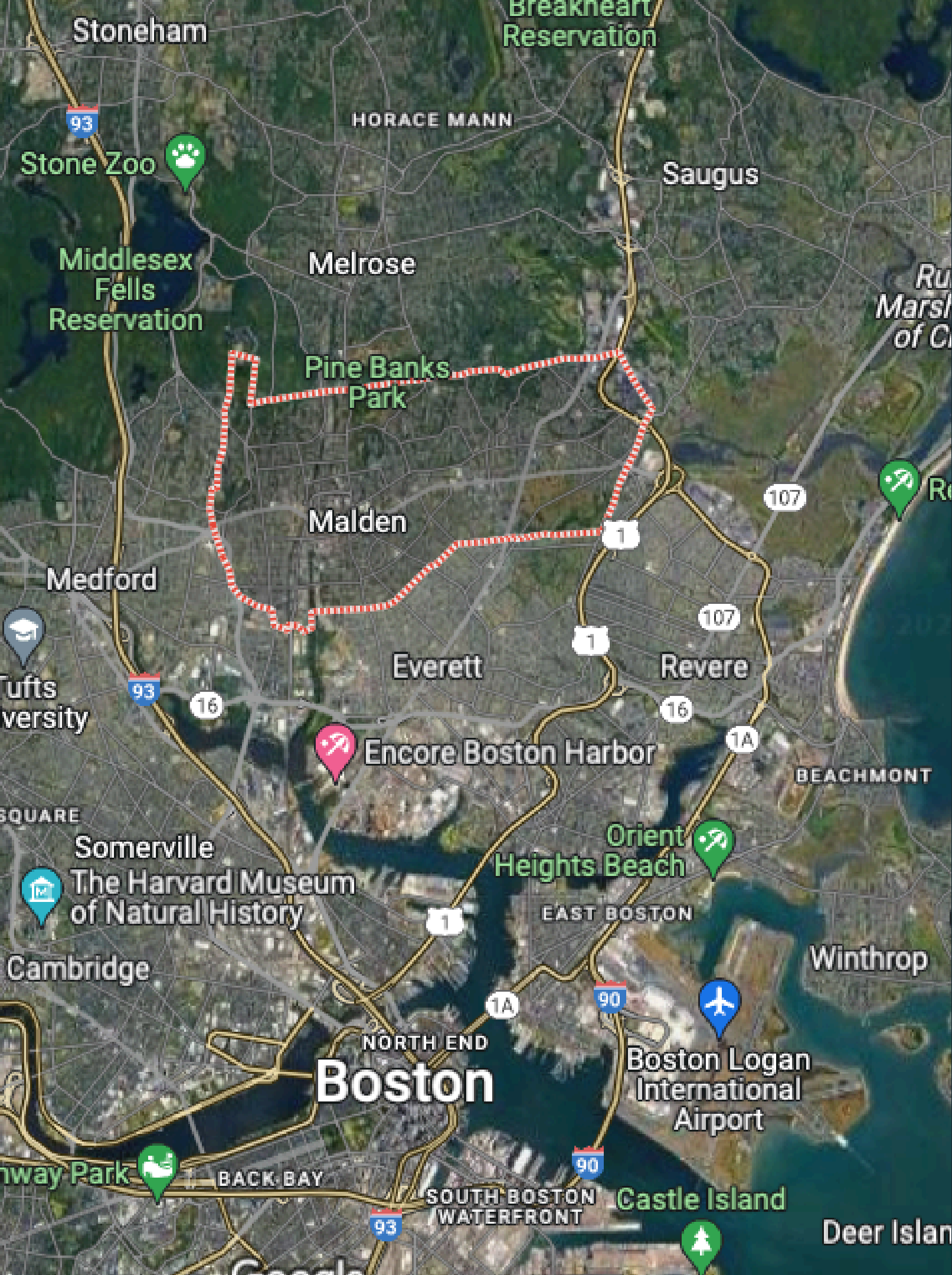
**The Great Malden Outdoors** ★  
Michelle Lorenti

This map was made with Google My Maps. [Create your own.](#)

Map data ©2024 Google [Terms](#) 2,000 ft [Keyboard shortcuts](#)







# So who is recreating in Malden?

## Surrounding towns by the numbers

In comparing both the 2021 and 2023 OIA Participation Reports, who I'm speaking with and seeing recreating are from neighboring towns:

- Malden: 44% white & \$77K median household income
- Melrose: 81% / \$125K
- Stoneham: 85% / \$105K
- Winchester: 75% / \$185K
- Medford: 69% / \$107K
- Somerville: 74% / \$109K

We're happy these folks are coming to Malden but the goal is to increase outdoor recreation amongst the residents here.





CBO's



Building via  
Listening a  
Coalition of  
Trusted Partners

Municipal Departments



BIKE TO  
THE SEA



Diverse Vendors



ROCK SPOT  
CLIMBING®

State Level Partnerships



Industry Support





# The 4 Parts of The Great Malden Outdoors

## Awareness via Advertising & Earned Media

Overcoming:  
You can do that here?  
Where did you take that photo?  
That's some white people sh\*t.

## Resources via Step-by-Step Digital Guide

Overcoming:  
What is this activity all about?  
Where do I start?  
Can I go with others?  
You can get a job doing this?

## Programming via Malden Rec Dept & Vendor Partners

Overcoming:  
Trust & cost  
Don't remake the wheel, use existing systems and audiences while looking for motivated and diverse vendors to deliver it.

## Workforce Development via youth mentorship & event team

Overcoming:  
You had a good time outside, now make it a career



Awareness

# The Ad Campaign

Examples: Highway Billboards, Recycling bins, yard signs in Malden

\*Resource: have you spoken to your OOH Media company in your town?





Authentic representation  
in front of the lens



Ads ran in 8 languages  
throughout the city,  
language chosen based  
on ethnic heat map

This is  
your city,

Surprise &  
delight, wow you  
can do that  
here?

Authentic  
representation behind  
the lens

Exact location

Climb it

Local sponsor looking for  
customers

TheGreatMaldenOutdoors.com

Sponsored By



Location:  
Waitts Mountain, Malden  
Photo by:  
LadyLockoff Photography



# Anatomy of an Equitable Ad



# Results

## Advertising + Earned Media

Apr 24 to Nov 24

- Over 500,000 impressions between: two Route 1 highway billboards, 10 recycling receptacles, and 24 yard signs in EJ communities.
- Over 6,000 views from one Boston Globe Today TV show, plus three more stories (Boston Globe, WBZ, Neighborhood View), and five press releases.



### **In Malden, an outdoor recreation campaign aims to fill 'adventure gap' in diverse communities**

The Great Malden Outdoors is trying to expose more groups to the city's various outdoor opportunities

By Tiana Woodard Globe



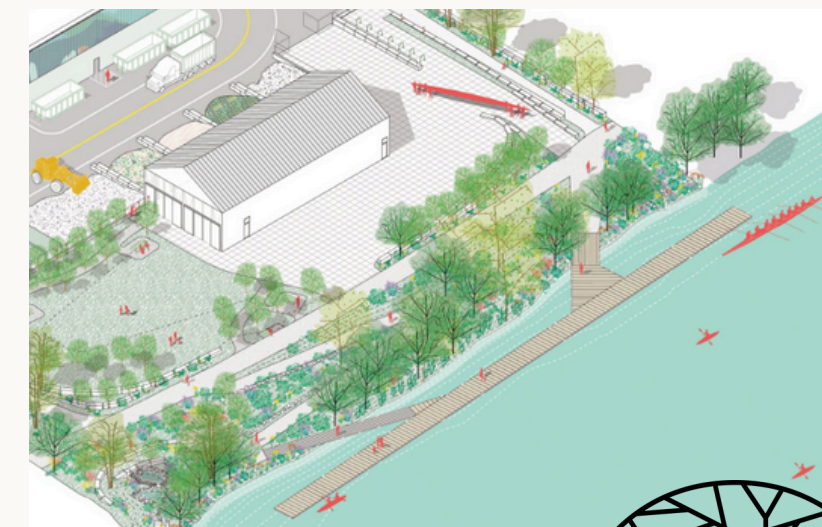
Rock climbing instructors John Mayo, left, and Austin Drury guide middle school aged kids as they climb a rock face in Malden's Waitt's Mount Park. ERIN CLARK/GLOBE STAFF

The "adventure gap" didn't form overnight. Before laws like the Civil Rights and Americans with Disabilities acts, certain groups were prohibited from public spaces altogether. Equipment and classes for activities are often expensive. Plus, there are few media representations of diverse people partaking in these outlets. Mix them all together and you have barriers between people and the adventure they seek, Mills said.

**\*Resource: [www.Diversify.Photo](http://www.Diversify.Photo)**

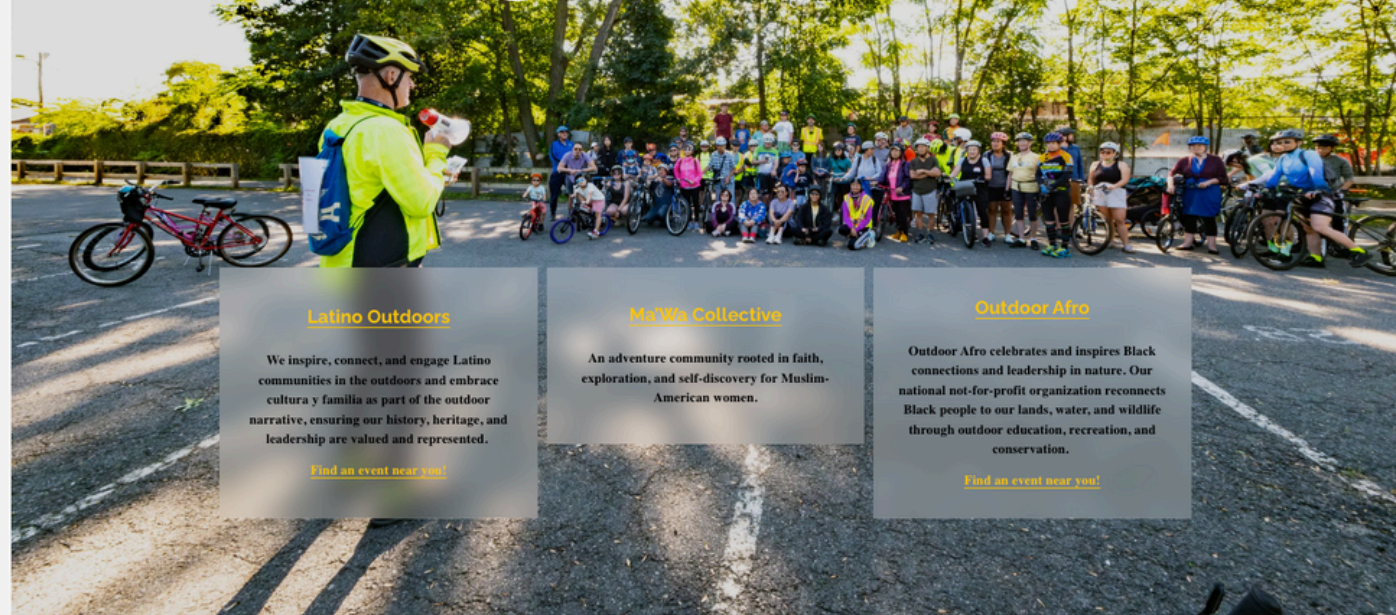


# Digital Guide, Quick Website Tour





# Looking for someone to go with?



### Latino Outdoors

We inspire, connect, and engage Latino communities in the outdoors and embrace cultura y familia as part of the outdoor narrative, ensuring our history, heritage, and leadership are valued and represented.

[Find an event near you!](#)

### Mo'Wa Collective

An adventure community rooted in faith, exploration, and self-discovery for Muslim-American women.

### Outdoor Afro

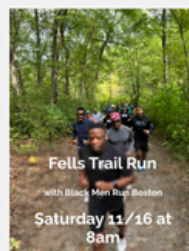
Outdoor Afro celebrates and inspires Black connections and leadership in nature. Our national not-for-profit organization reconnects Black people to our lands, water, and wildlife through outdoor education, recreation, and conservation.

[Find an event near you!](#)

# Events



[Register Here](#)



[Register Here](#)

# Results

## Web Traffic

- Over 4,300 visits from 3,600 unique visitors May through November 7th.
- 35% from MA
- 13% from Malden
- Phase 2, bringing in other Adventure Gap communities into Malden from the state

\*Resource: [www.SmartCat.com](http://www.SmartCat.com)



Programming

# A Coalition of Trusted Partners

Malden Recreation Department, Bike to the Sea, Rock Spot, Nature Man Mike, Friends of the Fells, Waypoint Adventure, and more!





# How did you learn?



## Funding



# The Learn to Ride Program



- 175 Kids learned how to ride a bike for just \$5
- 62 out of 175 kids did NOT own a bike
- Bikes were provided in the class and to keep after the class
- Families we asked to bring bikes back to the Bike Kitchen when their child outgrows it--keep them in Malden

# Bikes for kids



# Group ride







# Results

## All programs April to November

- 569 people participated across 47 different events or programs in Malden
- Total of 973 Nature Trips\*\*
- Programs and Events for:
  - Adaptive Hiking
  - Bike Riding
  - Bird Watching
  - Community clean ups
  - Community Fundraisers
  - Outdoor Art
  - Rock Climbing
  - Adults & Kid 8 week programs to one off events

**\*Resource: Your Recreation Department!**

\*\*Nature Trips, time spent outside. When two people attend an event, that's two Nature Trips. When two people complete a once a week program for 8 weeks, that's 16 Nature Trips.





# More programs on the way!

Rock Climbing was the fastest selling programs + events we had an we've got two more happening in Nov 24 through Apr 25

- Fells Rock Climbing Tour (25 attendees on 11/10)
- Creation of the Malden High Rock Climbing Club and grant funding paid for 2 days of climbing per month through Apr of 25 for the 12 to 15 members of the club
- Fells Rock Climbing Tour #2 (4/26/25)
- 8 Week Middle School Climbing Program (3X) going from 40 to 120 students in 25'
- Malden Climbing Festival 10/4/25

Location: Middlessex Fells, Malden MA



Workforce Development

# This can be a career

City of Malden Mayor's Youth Employment program,  
REI, FSS





# Results

## Year One Workforce Development

- One Malden High Graduate & Bunker Hill CC student with an interest in photography got to work with TGMO Campaign Photographer, Irene Yee, a National Geographic Photographer for three days
- He was able to take his BTS shots and pitch them to a local organization who was looking to purchase them
- Misses
  - Mass Audubon Society Environmental Fellowship for Urban Ecology Career & Malden High Biology Class
  - REI Learn to Ride local hires (18+)
  - Mayor's Youth Employment for Malden Multi-Lingual Events Team, ran out of time will try 2025







### City of Malden Budget

Two rounds of funding from ARPA:

- Org \$50,100 Sept 23 to Jun 24
- Additional \$25,000 Jun to Nov of 24
- Total = \$75,100



### First Seed Sown Raised

\$49,067 from:

- 5 grants written, 3 won, and 1 still pending
- 1 brand sponsorship
- 2 local donors
- 3 fundraisers with local partner

Costs:

City  
Funding  
+  
FSS  
Funds  
Raised

\$134,000



### Top expenditures

- First Seed Sown project management, over 500 hours
- 8 language website
- Advertising assets for both OOH and digital media
- Full year advertising campaign & renewed use of media + municipal contract
- Hundreds of licensed photos now owned by the city
- 50+ new bikes for kids to keep in the city bike kitchen
- 37 programs & events



### Pending Won Grant

\$10,000 from MOOR

- Adaptive Outdoor Program for Malden Public Schools for students with disabilities & special needs
- Expansion to 2nd school for after school Hiking Program



# Three Year Timeline

Transition from First Seed Sown fully running the campaign to city run with state and trade support



## Year 1

- Awareness and enablement for Malden residents & departments
- Start workforce development
- Establish diverse vendors

## Year 2

- Awareness beyond Malden to other Adventure Gap communities to come to Malden
- Expand enablement with more programs
- Workforce Development w/ events team and career seminar
- Deeper connection with Malden Public Schools

## Year 3

- Finalize training with city of Malden to run this program
- State + trade connections for funding for Malden + next EJ community





# Takeaways

Here's what I want you to walk away with from this presentation:

- An understanding of one potential comprehensive solution to this program...as much as we can in an hour
- Resources for you to make incremental change
  - [www.Diversify.Photo](http://www.Diversify.Photo)
  - SmartCat language translation services
  - Municipal OOH Ad Contracts
  - Your local Rec Dept
  - ME! Want someone else to hear this message?
- Take action in prioritizing Environmental Justice Communities / Adventure Gap Cities
- Hire diverse employees and contractors to do the work, with DEI the D & I mean nothing without the E!

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RCP Network Gathering | Nov. 2024

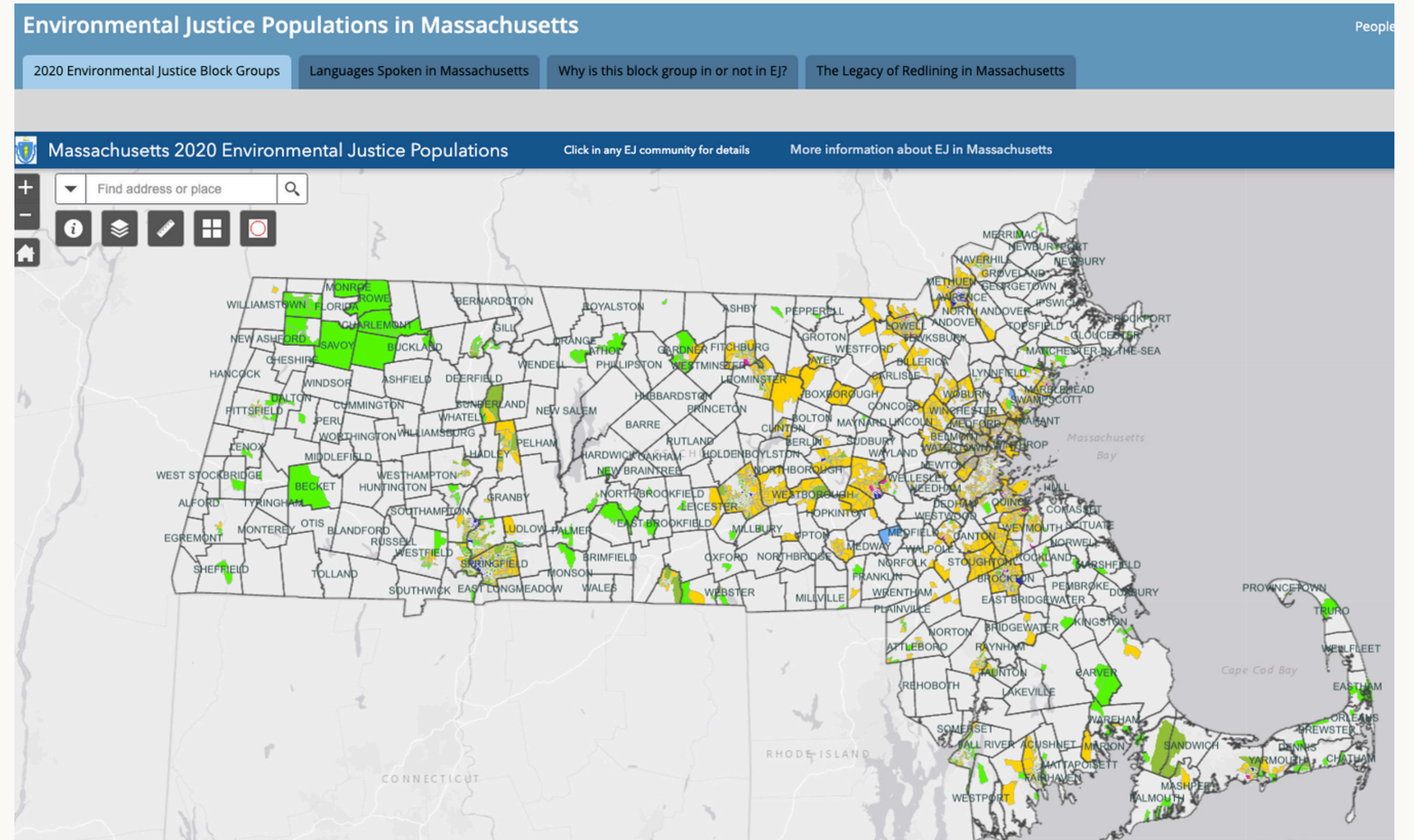


# Malden is just the beginning...

Who wants to be the next city or funder?

How do we take this statewide?

What about Nationwide?

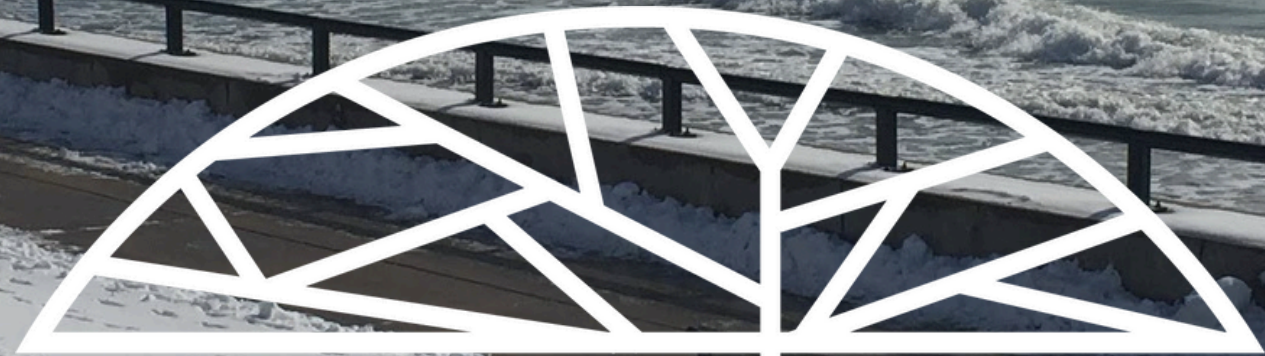


42.7% of Americans didn't recreate outside a single day in 2023. How do you fight for the planet when you've never experience it's positive benefits?



# Thank you

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**First Seed Sown**  
SALES AND MARKETING

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Location: King's Beach, Lynn MA