

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Nashville marked the 100th anniversary of its parks system in 2001. In recognition of this milestone, and to guide the system well into the future, Mayor Bill Purcell commissioned the first-ever parks and greenways master plan. A consultant team, led by Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC, was hired to evaluate existing parks and greenways, and prepare a plan for the future development of the system. The recommendations within the Plan were developed through extensive public input, an assessment of existing conditions, and a review of demographic projections as well as recreational trends. The Master Plan is designed to guide the maintenance of existing resources, as well as plan for the development of new parks, greenways, athletic activities, cultural activities, and recreational programs within the community for the next 20 years.

The projected population and commercial growth of Nashville over the next 20 years will challenge the city to provide adequate recreational opportunities and park facilities for its citizens. This plan provides the community with a guide to meet future recreational needs. The population growth and the accompanying land development will continue to reduce options available to Metro regarding additions and improvements to the parks and greenways system. Therefore, it is an important time to consider and assess the current state of Metro's parks, and to map out a guide to preserving and adequately maintaining the city's land and facilities and providing for the future parks and facilities. Ultimately, the quality of life for all citizens in 2020 will reflect the early, aggressive actions taken to implement this Plan.

While the Plan reflects extensive research, facility assessment and public involvement, including 9 public meetings resulting in more than 1,100 comments, Metro Parks is encouraged to reassess and to update the plan as needed over time to reflect changing community desires, values and anticipated uses. This plan reflects a great deal of public input and careful study. Any future adjustments should ensure this same level of commitment to generating a public dialogue and realizing community consensus.

THE EXISTING PARKS AND GREENWAYS SYSTEM

A significant component of this plan is an assessment of the existing system, which includes regional, community, neighborhood, and mini-parks, as well as greenways,

athletic facilities, community centers, and cultural programming. The existing system has a wide variety of programs and facilities. Among the highlights of Metro Parks:

- 100 Parks and Greenways encompassing more than 10,200 acres
- 53 playgrounds
- 21 community centers
- 2 senior centers
- Cultural programming including arts, dance
- Centennial Sportsplex, including two ice rinks, aquatics, and tennis
- The Parthenon
- Warner Parks, including Steeplechase and equestrian facilities
- 7 Golf Courses, including "The Vinny Links," a junior course and learning center
- Wave Country
- Athletic facilities, including baseball, softball and soccer fields, tennis and basketball courts

Assessments were separately conducted on the General Condition of all of Metro's Parks, Architectural Facilities, and Playgrounds.

General Condition of Parks- Every park was rated based on evaluation criteria including pedestrian and vehicular condition and accessibility, active and passive recreation facilities, signage:

- 2 - Parks rated "Dilapidated"
- 21 - Parks rated "Poor"
- 31 - Parks rated "Fair"
- 28 - Parks rated "Good"
- 3 - Parks rated "Excellent"

Architectural Facility Assessment- All structures were evaluated based on their physical condition, life cycle expectancies, and needed repairs. Overall:

- 60% were in satisfactory condition
- 33% were in need of repair
- 7% recommended for complete replacement

Playground Assessment- Findings indicated that a number of playgrounds were in good condition and met safety standards. However, the majority was either in need of repair or total replacement to meet current safety and ADA standards:

- 8% of playgrounds were in satisfactory or good condition
- 19% were in need of repair or alterations
- 73% need to be replaced
- Most play equipment was over ten years old and failed to meet current standards

Benchmarking the Existing System

The existing parks and greenways system serves a population of approximately 570,000, which equates to a ratio of 19.9 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. This ratio of acres per resident is quite low for a parks system serving a city of this size, and in comparison to cities of similar geographic areas.¹ More significantly, parkland as a percentage of land area (3.3%) ranks well below the national average of 7.7% for major cities. The plan recommends maintaining a minimum ratio of 17.5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Based on population projections, without additional parkland Nashville will have a deficit of roughly 2,000 acres of parkland by the year 2020.

Acres of Park/Open Space per thousand residents	
Jacksonville, FL	45.4
Austin, TX	38.9
Charlotte/Mecklenburg County, NC	20.9
Louisville/Jefferson County, KY	20.1
Nashville/Davidson County, TN	19.9
Memphis, TN	17.0
Indianapolis, IN	16.7

Parkland as a percentage of land area	
Austin, TX	15.9
Jacksonville, FL	6.9
Memphis, TN	5.7
Indianapolis, IN	5.7
Louisville/Jefferson KY	5.6
Charlotte/Mecklenburg County, NC	4.3
Nashville/Davidson County, TN	3.3

WHAT IS PROPOSED?

The Master Plan proposes improvements to every park within the parks and greenways system. The improvements vary by location, but include upgrades, repair or

replacement of existing playgrounds, buildings, sport fields, sidewalks, signage, fencing, etc., identified in the assessments.

A major goal of the plan is to provide green space and recreational opportunities to better serve neighborhoods.

- Majority of population should be within ½ mile of a park;
- All residents within 2 miles of a greenway

Additional highlights of the plan include:

- Adding 2,000 acres of new parklands;
- Building a new state of the art youth sports complex;
- Enhancing Wave Country and constructing a skate park;
- Reinvigorating the partnership with Metro Schools, providing playgrounds at all elementary schools and creating adjacent “community campuses,” to increase public recreation space;
- Building the greenway system to link parks, neighborhoods, and schools, ultimately achieving nearly 200 miles of greenway trails;
- Constructing new regional scale community centers at the following parks:
 1. East Park
 2. Hadley Park
 3. Richland Park area
 4. Coleman Park
 5. Sevier Park
- Making all facilities compliant with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act;
- Expanding educational, environmental, teen and cultural programming;
- Improving revenue generating facilities;
- Improving operation and maintenance of the park system.

WHAT WILL IT COST?

The cost estimate for the improvements to the parks and greenways system have been divided into two categories: Deferred Maintenance and Recommended Enhancements.

The Deferred Maintenance costs are for improvements that are needed to keep existing parks and facilities in a condition where they can fulfill their useful life cycle, their recreational viability, and to conduct repairs as needed to ensure public safety and accessibility. Implementation of the recommended Deferred Maintenance items will keep the existing parks and greenways system in a proper and reasonable working condition.

The minimum recommended average annual cost over the next ten (10) years is approximately \$ 3.27 million per year. The recommended phasing in over time of the most immediate and necessary improvements places a higher annual amount within the first five (5) years – approximately \$ 5.9 million per year.

The Recommended Enhancements costs are for new and significantly enhanced community centers, recreational facilities, substantial general accessibility improvements, an expanded greenways system, parkland acquisition, and a variety of other regional and community projects. These enhancements are projected to provide the facilities needed to meet the needs of the population as it grows over the next 20 years. The estimated average annual cost over the next ten (10) years, as recommended, is approximately \$23.02 million per year.

While these Deferred Maintenance and Recommended Enhancement costs may seem very large, they represent a combined commitment of less than thirteen (13) cents per day for the current residents of Nashville and Davidson County

CONCLUSION

This master plan is an ambitious guide for the future development of the park system. The quality of life for the current and future citizens of Nashville will be enhanced by a strong commitment to implement the plan. This study is designed to act as a living document to guide future development of the parks and greenways system to meet the changing recreation needs of Nashville and Davidson County residents and will help to protect and enhance important natural and cultural resources and valuable open spaces throughout the county. The public will benefit from a parks system that will be poised to advance and adapt to the changing demographics and participation trends in an increasingly diverse and growing county. As Nashville's park system begins its second century, the city has the potential to achieve the vision embodied in this plan.

¹ Peter Harnik, Inside City Parks (Washington: The Trust for Public Land, 2000) – updated in 2001.

