



# OKLAHOMA CITY PARKS MASTER PLAN

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# **OKLAHOMA CITY PARKS MASTER PLAN**

August 2013

Prepared for the City of Oklahoma City and the Oklahoma City Community Foundation by WRT



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**Discovering nature.**

A family pauses on a bridge at Martin Park Nature Center to look at the water below.





# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Oklahoma City is on an impressive track towards national urban prominence with a vibrant economy, an admired massive infrastructure program, a growing presence in the worlds of professional sports and Olympic and amateur rowing, and an increasing arts and cultural scene. Its gleaming new Devon Energy Center and sparkling redesigned Myriad Botanical Gardens park and conservatory make for a riveting downtown focal point. Plans for a vibrant Central Park and downtown neighborhood bode well for a more walkable urban future in Oklahoma City.

The city's success has attracted growth downtown and at the fringes. The City of Oklahoma City government (the City) is looking for ways to continue providing services and facilities—from transportation to public safety to parks—in established neighborhoods as well as brand new neighborhoods. What Oklahoma City needs is a new parks plan—a clear and compelling vision for its park system over the coming decades—to mirror other advances that the city has accomplished.



This *Parks Master Plan*—funded by the City of Oklahoma City and the Oklahoma City Community Foundation—is a plan for parks within the City of Oklahoma City. It builds on other studies and supports ongoing efforts, including Oklahoma City’s comprehensive plan, **planOKC**.

Significant input from residents through a community survey and meetings with stakeholders confirmed the importance of Oklahoma City’s park system to quality of life in and economic well-being of the city and highlighted opportunities to improve the park system.

Six strategic directions were synthesized from citizen and stakeholder input and provide high-level guidance for the City and its partners in establishing new policies and programs, developing new partnerships, and allocating resources to maintain, improve, and leverage the park system for greater community benefit.

1. Maintain and improve physical assets of existing parks.
2. Develop facilities and programs in existing parks to meet community needs.
3. Improve access to existing parks.
4. Promote and increase awareness of the value of parks.
5. Develop new parks and facilities.
6. Establish agreements and standards for private parks and school parks.

For each of the strategic directions, this *Parks Master Plan* establishes a rationale, a set of actions that can move the park system in that direction, and specific action steps that the City and its partners can take to implement the actions. An action table takes this a step further to assign responsibility for implementation, list potential implementation partners, offer performance measures to gauge success, and suggest a time frame for implementation.

The 2005 *Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan* included a park typology for Oklahoma City. The 2013 *Parks Master Plan* categorizes the classifications into three tiers for the purpose of defining levels of service: local parks, regional parks, and other parks.

Each park classification includes a general description, a typical size range, a typical length of visit, access provisions, and a list of appropriate amenities for that type of park.

The 2005 *Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan* also did a thorough, standards-based analysis of park service areas and park needs. This plan does not revisit the standards identified in the previous plan but instead focuses on filling analysis gaps, particularly related to park and trail access.

Oklahoma City’s park system has not grown uniformly as the city has grown. As a result, different areas of the city have different levels of access to parks. In some parts of the city, residents may be within a 5 minute walk of a park while in other parts of the city, residents may not be able to feasibly walk to a park at all.

The level of service tiers in this plan—central city, urban area, urban growth area, and rural area—balance the existing assets of the park system with the locations of existing and projected population. The standards for each tier reflect the location of existing parks and the budgetary constraints of developing new parks to increase service. Applying the standards to the existing park system revealed:

- the number of residents served by local parks could more than double—from 18% to 48%—without building any new parks by improving access to existing parks;
- a large majority of residents (86%) are served by existing regional parks;
- the percentage of residents served by the trail system could be increased from 51% to 71% by improving access to existing trails; and
- additional parks and trails are needed in particular areas to create an accessible, connected park system.

In addition to analysis of the physical park system, the process of developing this plan included an analysis of the system’s financial situation. Overall, Oklahoma City’s park system is underfunded compared to peer cities and national best practices. This plan offers funding options to supplement funding the Parks and Recreation Department receives from the City’s general fund in order to improve the park system and achieve the strategic directions.

Finally, this plan includes recommendations for partnerships. The continued success of Oklahoma City’s park system cannot be solely the responsibility of the City, but instead will rely on the City working hand-in-hand with a robust network of partners.

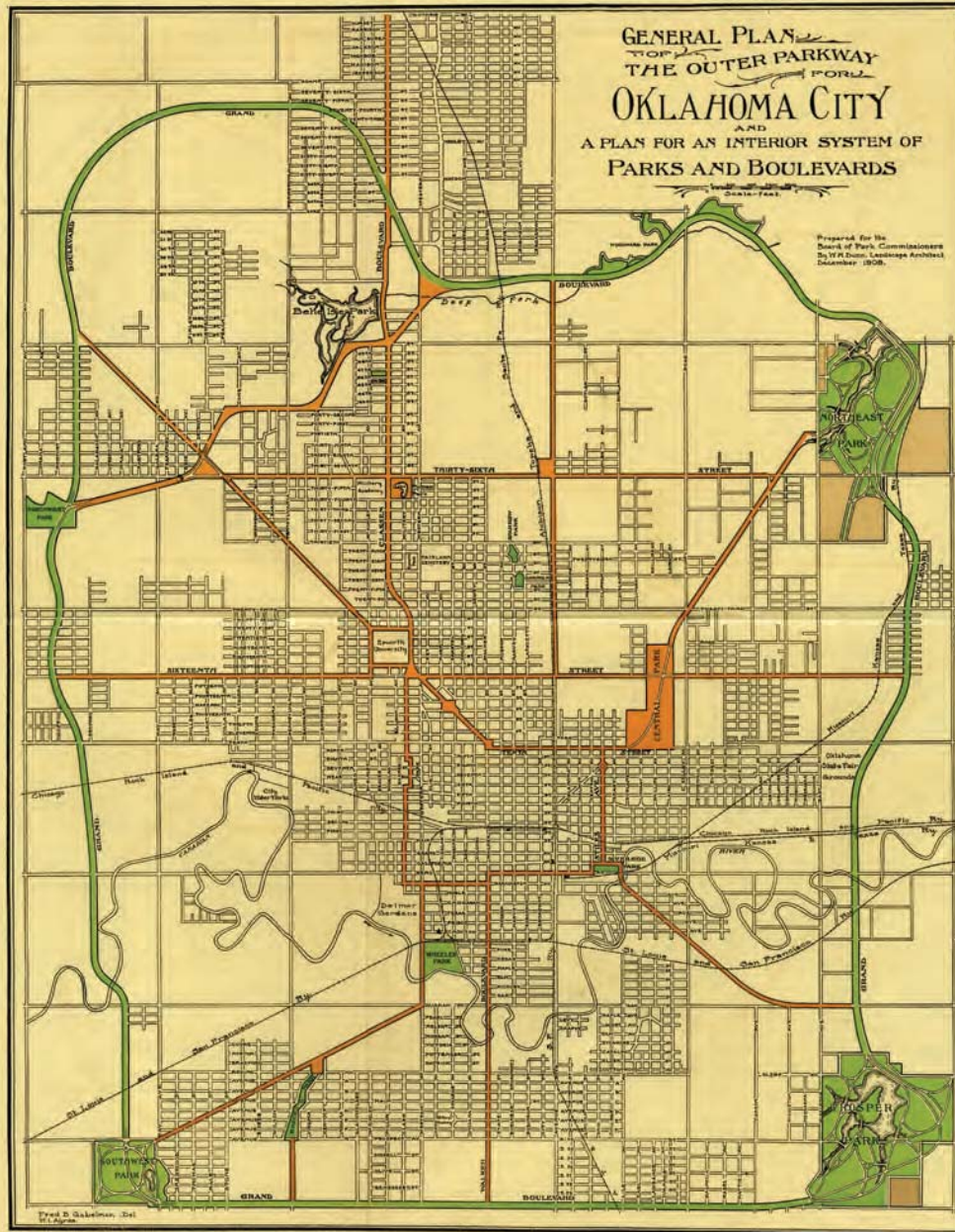
#### Taking in the view.

A couple relaxes on a bench at Will Rogers Gardens, surrounded by beautiful horticulture.



## 2. LAYING A FOUNDATION

The *Parks Master Plan* was influenced by the citizens of Oklahoma City, previous and ongoing planning efforts, the City of Oklahoma City, the Oklahoma City Community Foundation, elected officials, and other stakeholders from the public and private sectors.



**Planting the seeds of a bold and striking park system.**

Landscape architect W.H. Dunn's 1910 plan for Oklahoma City's park system included four major corner parks connected by a Grand Boulevard.

There is a strong, new civic commitment to improve the parks and urban fabric of Oklahoma City.

## BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

In the early years of the 20th century, the Oklahoma City Parks Commission hired W.H. Dunn, a landscape architect from Kansas City, to design a system for the young city which, at the time, had the ambitious goal of reaching a population of 200,000 within a decade. The plan he proposed was bold and striking—four major corner parks connected by a beautiful, tree-lined Grand Boulevard. With the strong backing of the park commissioners, the leading newspapers, and other city leaders, a major park bond was passed, the land was purchased or donated, and the great boulevard was laid out and graded. Gaining from the experiences of older cities like Camden, New Jersey, Lowell, Massachusetts, and Hartford, Connecticut, the Oklahoma City Park Commission plunged ahead, buying land not only for parks but also for adjoining development that, when sold, was used to cover costs of park acquisition and development. As a result, Northeast Park (now Lincoln Park), Southeast Park (now Trosper Park), Southwest Park (now Woodson Park) and Northwest Park (now Will Rogers Park) were opened in short order. They were all on the outskirts of the small city but helped lead to its expansion and development, and many other infill parks were acquired or donated by generous individuals or real estate developers.

The steady evolution of Oklahoma City's park system, however, was overwhelmed after World War II by two factors—the construction of the interstate highway system within city limits and the substantial expansion of the city's physical size through annexation between 1950 and 1970. As a result, several of the significant older parks are now bisected by highways while parts of Grand Boulevard no longer exist.

Moreover, as the city's population has continued to grow farther and farther from the center, the City has been presented with the challenge of providing services and facilities to serve a larger geographic area. The Parks and Recreation Department has not had the funds to keep providing more new parks as well as maintaining the old ones. As a result, in The Trust for Public Land's 2013 ParkScore® ranking of the park systems of the 50 largest cities, Oklahoma City came in 43<sup>rd</sup> based on such factors as acreage, park size, park access, playgrounds, and public spending.

There is, however, a strong, new civic commitment to improve the parks and the urban fabric of Oklahoma City. This spirit emanates not only from the Parks and Recreation Department, but also from the corporate and philanthropic sectors, the sports and nature constituencies, the Oklahoma City Planning Department, the citizens at large, and the mayor and city council. There is a commitment to making better use of existing parkland, redefining some of the rules and conventions covering park management and maintenance, devising more linkages between parks, creating more parkland, and building public-private and public-public partnerships.

This document, which is based on the input of hundreds of people and institutions as well as the accumulation of management and comparative data, provides the blueprint for an improved park system for Oklahoma City.

## PLANNING PROCESS

The 2013 *Parks Master Plan* for Oklahoma City builds on the findings of previous studies, including the 2005 *Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan*, the issues and goals identified through **planokc**, and the 2011 *Oklahoma City Park System Study*. The primary goals of the planning process were to assess community needs for parks and open space, assess connectivity and access to parks and open spaces, and define a strategic action plan to meet identified needs and increase connectivity—including strategies for funding, management, and partnerships. The *Parks Master Plan* will provide the foundation for **playokc**, the parks and recreation element of **planokc**.

A Steering Committee comprised of representatives from the Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Department, Oklahoma City Planning Department, and Oklahoma City Community Foundation stewarded the process and oversaw a consultant team led by WRT.

The project was structured into four phases.

### Project Launch

In the project launch phase, the Steering Committee and consultant team reviewed existing plans, data, budgets, operational practices, and funding sources. In June 2012, the Steering Committee and

consultant team met to review, update, and confirm the mission and goals for the *Parks Master Plan* and present the planning process to key stakeholders. The consultant team also interviewed Steering Committee member organizations and other key stakeholders about strengths of and opportunities for the city's park system.

### Analysis

In the analysis phase, the consultant team administered a community survey over the winter of 2012–2013 to over 600 households to help identify park and recreation priorities; analyzed park access and connectivity; analyzed park needs in relation to existing and projected population; and reviewed current funding, operations, and maintenance practices of the Parks and Recreation Department.

### Synthesis

In the synthesis phase, direction was set for the development of the *Parks Master Plan*. In March 2013, the consultant team presented the results of the analysis phase to the Steering Committee and key stakeholders. The Steering Committee and consultant team synthesized a set of strategic directions to focus the development of plan recommendations. Stakeholders confirmed and prioritized these strategic directions.

### Strategic Plan Development

In the final phase of work, the consultant team worked with the Steering Committee to develop plan recommendations, including actions for the City and partners to take to meet community needs. Stakeholders reviewed plan recommendations in August 2013.

## MISSION

The 2005 *Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan* established a mission for the Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Department. The 2013 *Parks Master Plan* was developed to serve as a guide for the entire park system, both public and private. Therefore, the mission of this plan was adapted from the 2005 plan: The mission of the Oklahoma City park system is to promote the highest quality of life and to stimulate the economic viability of Oklahoma City by providing great parks, public areas, and quality cultural and leisure time opportunities for our citizens and visitors.

## GOALS

The goals from the parks, recreation, and open space element of Oklahoma City's comprehensive plan, *planokc*, have been incorporated as the goals of this plan to support the mission. These goals were developed through a separate planning process that involved the collaboration of City staff working groups, citizen stakeholder groups, public review, and a citizen advisory team.

- City parks are funded, operated, and maintained in a manner in which people have the amenities and park services they need, and enjoy a safe and clean park environment.
- Parks in Oklahoma City have facilities, programming, amenities, and activities well matched to the recreational needs of residents and visitors.
- Oklahoma City's park system is accessible to its users by a connected system including roadways, transit, trails, bicycle facilities, and sidewalks.
- Public and private parks are designed to achieve optimum safety, accessibility, and attractiveness while reflecting the character of the surrounding community.
- Oklahoma City's park system provides multiple opportunities for people to enjoy a healthy lifestyle.

## KEY FINDINGS FROM PREVIOUS EFFORTS

The 2005 *Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan* and the other studies conducted since its completion provided a basis for developing the 2013 *Parks Master Plan*.

### Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan (2005)

The 2005 *Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan* was the last plan done for the Oklahoma City park system. The plan lays out a park classification system and population-based standards adapted from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) for park acreage and selected facilities. The classification system was used as a basis for the classification system in Chapter 4.

The mission of the Oklahoma City park system is to promote the highest quality of life and to stimulate the economic viability of Oklahoma City by providing great parks, public areas, and quality cultural and leisure time opportunities for our citizens and visitors.



In the 2000 community survey, non-motorized “trail-based” activities were identified as very important to residents.

### 2000 Community Survey

A city-wide recreation needs survey was commissioned by the Parks and Recreation Department in 2000 to solicit input into their city-wide master plan. Major findings included:

- Non-motorized “trail-based” activities appeared to be very important to Oklahoma City residents. Sixty-one percent of respondents frequently participated in walking for pleasure.
- Over half of respondents were not sure whether or not Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation offered a good variety of programs and activities (59%) or were responsive to different age groups (52%).
- Many of the respondents (40%) were not aware of programs and activities sponsored by Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation and did not believe that Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation is an important provider of recreation for their household.
- The highest ranking priorities overall were upgrading parks and playgrounds (91%), building trails (90%), and providing recreation programs/facilities for children (90%) and teenagers (89%).

### Standards Analysis

The 2005 *Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan* proposed sizes and locations for 31 new neighborhood parks and 8 new community parks to meet standards for the projected 2010 population.

The 2005 plan also identified the need for additional recreation facilities to meet facility standards, most notably additional basketball courts, playgrounds, and volleyball courts.

### Oklahoma City Park System Study (2011)

The Oklahoma City Community Foundation commissioned the Meinders School of Business at Oklahoma City University to conduct a study to assess the Oklahoma City park system in terms of funding, demographics, and safety; to assess the park system within the context of the Trust for Public Land’s seven measures of an excellent system; and to review the operational cost impacts of new park improvements. Major findings include:

- From 2000 to 2010, Oklahoma City’s population grew relatively more rapidly at the city’s geographic fringe areas, with the exception of a renaissance in the downtown area.
- Above average growth rates were observed in the northwest and southwest parts of the city.
- The operating budget for the Parks and Recreation Department is tied to the cyclically sensitive general sales tax—which accounts for half the city’s General Fund—because property tax revenues in Oklahoma may only be used for capital projects.
- There is no comprehensive marketing plan for the Oklahoma City park system. The Parks and Recreation Department marketing staff consists of one person.
- Information is not routinely analyzed on the demographic makeup of users and non-users of parks, or on benefits provided by parks, such as property values.
- New capital projects, such as the new Central Park, will require long-term changes to the expenditures of maintenance costs by the City of Oklahoma City. A study is underway to evaluate how such costs for the new downtown park will be financed.
- An Oklahoma City Parks Foundation exists but is not active. Activating this foundation could generate a flow of private resources to supplement city funding for some parks.

### Analysis of Crime in Oklahoma City Parks (2012)

The Oklahoma City Planning Department conducted an analysis of crime incidents within and around city parks to determine if crime rates are higher in and around city parks. Major findings include:

- The 2012 City of Oklahoma City DirectionFinder® Survey indicated that 31% of residents felt unsafe in city parks.
- The crime rate for parks is two orders of magnitude less than the city average as well as the corresponding crime rates for their respective service areas.
- Due to significantly low crime rates, city parks are relatively safe in terms of reported crime incidents.
- The feelings of being unsafe expressed by citizens are based more on perception than on reality and may be related to factors such as park maintenance, lighting, and design.

The crime rate for parks is less than the city average and less than the rates in corresponding service areas.

## RELATION TO ONGOING EFFORTS

In addition to building on previous efforts, the 2013 *Parks Master Plan* builds on and supports the momentum of ongoing efforts.

### planokc

Oklahoma City is in the midst of developing a new comprehensive plan, called planokc. It is a long-range plan with the goal of ensuring a healthy environment, community, and economy for the city's residents. The plan has nine elements:

- **sustainokc**      future land use
- **connectokc**    transportation
- **greenokc**        environmental & natural resources
- **liveokc**          communities
- **enrichokc**      preservation, appearance & culture
- **playokc**         parks & recreation
- **strengthenokc**   economic development
- **serveokc**        public services
- **gookc**            implementation

While many of these elements are highly connected and interrelated, the element that most closely relates to the 2013 *Parks Master Plan* is **playokc**. The planning process for planokc included setting goals for each element to establish priorities that guide decisions affecting how the community grows and develops. Planners developed preliminary goal statements based on public input. A series of refinements were made by City staff working groups, citizen stakeholder groups, and a citizen advisory team. The public was asked to review and comment on the goals, and these comments were incorporated into the final goal statements. As previously noted, the **playokc** goals from planokc have been incorporated into this *Parks Master Plan*. This direction has set a foundation for the recommendations in this plan.

## Core to Shore Plan (2008)

The I-40 highway constructed in 1965 effectively created a barrier between downtown Oklahoma City and a more underdeveloped, industrial, and blighted area to the south. In 2002, federal funding was approved to renovate I-40, which included relocating the portion crossing downtown five blocks to the south. The City recognized this as an opportunity to rejoin the downtown core to the developing Oklahoma River area. The resultant planning effort was the *Core to Shore Plan*, and its goal was to connect the river to downtown by creating a new urban neighborhood and revitalizing 750 acres of underutilized land. The plan envisioned a grand central park that would provide a greenbelt to the river and serve as a catalyst for area revitalization. In 2009, funding for the 75-acre grand park was one of the projects included on the MAPS 3 initiative passed by city voters. The City has since acquired most of the park area, and construction of the \$132 million park is scheduled to begin in late 2013 and continue in phases through 2020.



### Reconnecting downtown and the Oklahoma River.

The Core to Shore land use illustration suggests a plan for the development of major public parks, civic spaces, housing, retail, and office space that will knit downtown to the river.

## BENCHMARKING

As part of the process of developing the 2013 *Parks Master Plan*, Oklahoma City’s publicly-owned park system was compared with the publicly-owned park systems of six other cities identified as peers:

- Charlotte, North Carolina
- Fort Worth, Texas
- Indianapolis, Indiana
- Kansas City, Missouri
- Louisville, Kentucky
- Memphis, Tennessee

With the exception of Charlotte, all comparisons were made on a city-to-city basis. Since Charlotte has a merged city-county park agency, data from Mecklenburg County Parks was used. However, Charlotte comprises the vast majority of the area and population of the county, so there is little difference using city or county numbers.

Of the cities, Oklahoma City is by far the largest in area (even larger than Mecklenburg County). But, interestingly, it is the second-smallest (after Kansas City) in population. These facts highlight how sparsely populated the city is, compared to its peers.

Numbers for Oklahoma City do not include the Civic Center Music Hall, Oklahoma City Zoo, Myriad Botanical Gardens, or other special facilities (nor do the benchmark numbers include some specialized parks in Louisville and Indianapolis).

### Amenities

In terms of parkland, the city scores high in relation to acres per population, but is only average in relation to acres as a percentage of city land area. (It is worth noting that Oklahoma City parkland has a higher-than-average amount of water acreage.)

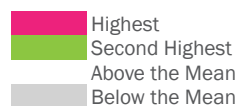
On a per-capita basis, Oklahoma City outperforms its peer cities in several categories—most notably skate parks. It also scores higher than the mean with recreation centers, playgrounds, and contracts with non-profit organizations.

On the other hand, it scores below the mean, per capita, in ball fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, dog parks, employees, garden plots, number of park units, and permanent restrooms with unrestricted access.

Oklahoma City outperforms its peers in several categories—most notably skate parks.

Oklahoma City’s Peers Generally Provide a Higher Level of Amenities  
Park Amenities Comparisons to Peer Cities

	Oklahoma City	Charlotte	Fort Worth	Indianapolis	Kansas City	Louisville	Memphis
Percent of City Land Area as Parkland	5.6	5.5	5.3	4.8	8.6	7.1	4.5
Acres of Parkland per 1,000 residents	37.7	20.2	15.7	13.6	37.9	23.5	14.1
Private Support Groups	7	0	8	7	13	4	5
Ball Fields per 10,000 residents	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.7	3.2	1.2	1.8
Basketball Courts per 10,000 residents	1.5	1.1	1.5	2.3	1.7	2.6	2.9
Dog Parks per 100,000 residents	0.3	0.7	0.1	0.5	0.2	0.6	0.3
Park Employees per 10,000 residents	2.9	2.8	5.8	4.2	6.1	5.2	4.1
Garden Plots per 10,000 residents	0.0	3.9	0.0	2.9	4.0	7.2	0.0
Contracts with Non-Profits	74	27	254	45	21	24	21
Park Units per 10,000 residents	2.7	2.6	3.5	2.5	5.0	1.7	3.0
Playgrounds per 10,000 residents	1.9	1.3	2.4	1.6	2.2	1.7	1.8
Pools per 100,000 residents	0.9	0.5	0.9	2.7	2.6	0.8	2.8
Rec Centers per 50,000 residents	2.2	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.1	1.2	2.4
Restrooms per 100,000 residents	8.3*	4.9	12.1	40.2	14.8	33.9	0.6
Skate Parks per 100,000 residents	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.2
Tennis Courts per 10,000 residents	1.3	1.5	1.3	1.4	2.3	2.4	1.3



\*Restrooms include only permanent facilities on publicly-owned park properties with unlimited public access, though some may only be open seasonally.

### Spending

Oklahoma City spends less than its peers on parks. It is below the mean, per capita, on maintenance spending, operating spending, full-time employees and spending per full-time employee (although it is well above the mean on seasonal employees). It is below the

mean on private funds raised for the agency (although it is above the median, since the mean is heavily skewed by private fund-raising in Kansas City).

#### Oklahoma City Spends Less than Its Peers

Park Spending Comparisons to Peer Cities

	Oklahoma City	Charlotte	Fort Worth	Indianapolis	Kansas City	Louisville	Memphis
Maintenance Expenditures per resident	\$17.41	\$24.77	\$23.86	\$7.18	\$37.74	\$21.62	\$8.80
Maintenance per acre	\$462	\$1,228	\$1,523	\$527	\$996	\$921	\$622
Operations per resident	\$34.32	\$43.93	\$60.80	\$27.70	\$73.31	\$31.50	\$26.18
Operations per acre	\$912	\$2,178	\$3,882	\$2,035	\$1,935	\$1,341	\$1,853
Full Time Employees per resident	2.9	2.8	5.8	4.2	6.1	5.2	4.1
Spending per Full Time Employee	\$117k	\$158k	\$104k	\$66k	\$120k	\$61k	\$64k
Seasonal Employees per resident	7.1	1.6	1.2	5.7	1.0	0.5	8.0
Private Funds Raised	\$0.18M	\$0	\$0.87M	\$0.20M	\$2.32M	\$0.15M	\$0
Private Donations Given per resident	\$0.30	\$0.00	\$1.17	\$0.24	\$5.05	\$0.22	\$0.00

Highest  
 Second Highest  
 Above the Mean  
 Below the Mean

#### Staying fit.

Fitness equipment in Lincoln Park demonstrates that playgrounds are not just for children.



## STAKEHOLDER THEMES

At a Strategic Planning Work Session in June 2012, stakeholders were given the issues statements from play**okc** and were asked, in groups, to confirm and elaborate on them. This input was combined with issues identified through interviews with individual Steering Committee organizations and other stakeholders. Five major themes emerged from the combined stakeholder input.

### Need to Increase Connectivity and Access

- Better connect parks in the park system to each other through sidewalks, trails, greenbelts, open space, etc.
- Enable more residents to travel to parks by improving connectivity and access of the street, sidewalk, and bicycle networks.
- Ensure that residents throughout the city are adequately served by parks.

### Parks Are Undervalued

- Lack of awareness of publicly-owned parks may be improved through developing customized branding strategies.
- Improve public perception about the value and safety of parks.
- Increase awareness and participation in park programs through better recognition of partnerships.
- Lack of awareness of park classifications and maintenance standards leads to expectations of consistent maintenance across all parks.

### Health and Wellness

- Lack of access to parks has been shown in studies to correlate with high obesity rates.
- Maximize opportunities for residents and visitors to use the park system to stay healthy and fit.
- Local organizations, such as the City-County Health Department and Wellness Now, may be potential partners that support using parks to promote health and wellness.

Nearly two thirds of households consider city parks to be in good condition.

### Growth Patterns Affect Service

- Increasing development and growth is occurring outside of the area currently served by city parks.
- New neighborhoods being built beyond the area served by city parks may include private parks, but many do not.

### Proactive vs. Reactive Management Posture

- The limited resources of the Parks and Recreation Department make it increasingly difficult to respond to current parks and recreation needs. As the city continues to grow outward and the population continues to increase, residents' needs and expectations will outpace the City's capacity to respond.

## 2013 COMMUNITY SURVEY

During the fall of 2012 and winter of 2013, Leisure Vision, a division of ETC Institute, conducted a citywide community interest and opinion survey about parks, recreation, and open space. This survey was a key component of the analysis supporting the *Parks Master Plan* to understand current park system usage, determine priorities for future improvements, and measure support for ways to financially sustain the park system.

The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households across Oklahoma City. Over 600 mail and phone surveys were completed from a random sample of 2,400 households. Some results are compared to national benchmarks developed by ETC Institute from over 400 parks and recreation surveys administered across the country. Key findings are summarized by category.

### Park Access and Usage

- Fairly equal numbers of households use neighborhood parks (55%) and community parks (53%).
- Over three quarters of households have visited at least one Oklahoma City park in the past year.
- Nearly two thirds of households consider city parks to be in good condition. Excellent ratings (13%) are lower than national benchmarks (31%), while fair ratings (21%) are higher (12%).

- Households primarily drive (90%) and walk (38%) to parks.
- A majority (52%) of respondents do not feel there are sufficient parks and green space areas within walking distance of home.
- Only about 11% of respondents participated in programs offered in the last year, much lower than national benchmarks. A majority of those who participate rate the quality as good.
- Almost half (45%) of respondents find out about parks, programs, and activities from friends and neighbors.
- Over a third (37%) of respondents do not use parks and recreation facilities because they do not know what is being offered, and nearly a third say they are too far from home.
- Approximately 85% of respondents feel quality parks, facilities, and programs are important to the overall pursuit of a healthy and active lifestyle.

### Senior Wellness Centers

- The five amenities that would be used most at a Senior Wellness Center are:
  - indoor walking and jogging track (53%)
  - direct access to outdoor walking and biking trails (45%)
  - fitness equipment (43%)
  - indoor lap/water aerobics pool (39%)
  - therapy pool (38%)
- A majority of households would use a Senior Wellness Center if it had the program spaces of most importance to them.
- Approximately 58% of respondents would use the center at least once a week.

### Funding

- To fund the parks, trails, and recreation facilities that are most important to them:
  - 58% support some increase in taxes
  - 62% support some increase in user fees
- Two-thirds of respondents would be willing to pay a fee for membership to a Senior Wellness Center. Of those, over 80% would pay \$5–30 per person per month.

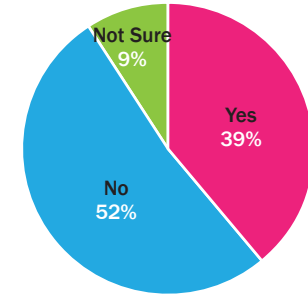
### Identified Priorities

The survey identified priority types of parks and recreation facilities, priority programs, and priority actions for the City to take to improve the park system. The top five priorities below represent the areas of greatest need that are not being met.

Priority Parks & Facilities	Priority Programs	Priority Actions
1 Walking and Biking Trails (38%)	1 Adult Fitness/Wellness Programs (22%)	1 Upgrade Neighborhood Parks (28%)
2 Indoor Pool/Leisure Pool (21%)	2 Special Events/Festivals (17%)	2 Build New Walking/Biking Trails (22%)
3 Small Neighborhood Parks (21%)	3 Senior Programs (16%)	3 Upgrade Community Parks (21%)
4 Indoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities (19%)	4 Walking/Biking Groups (15%)	4 Develop New Senior Wellness Centers (21%)
5 Large Community Parks (18%)	5 Family Programs (14%)	5 Purchase Land for Neighborhood Parks (19%)

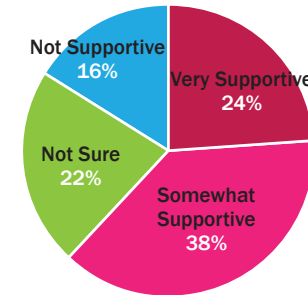
### A Majority Do Not Feel Close Enough to Walk to Parks

Sufficient Parks and Green Spaces within Walking Distance of Home



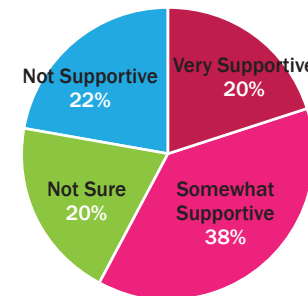
### Nearly Two Thirds Support Increased Taxes

Support for Some Increase in Taxes to Pay for Parks, Trails, and Recreation Facilities



### A Majority Supports Increased Fees

Support for Some Increase in User Fees to Pay for Parks, Trails, and Recreation Facilities

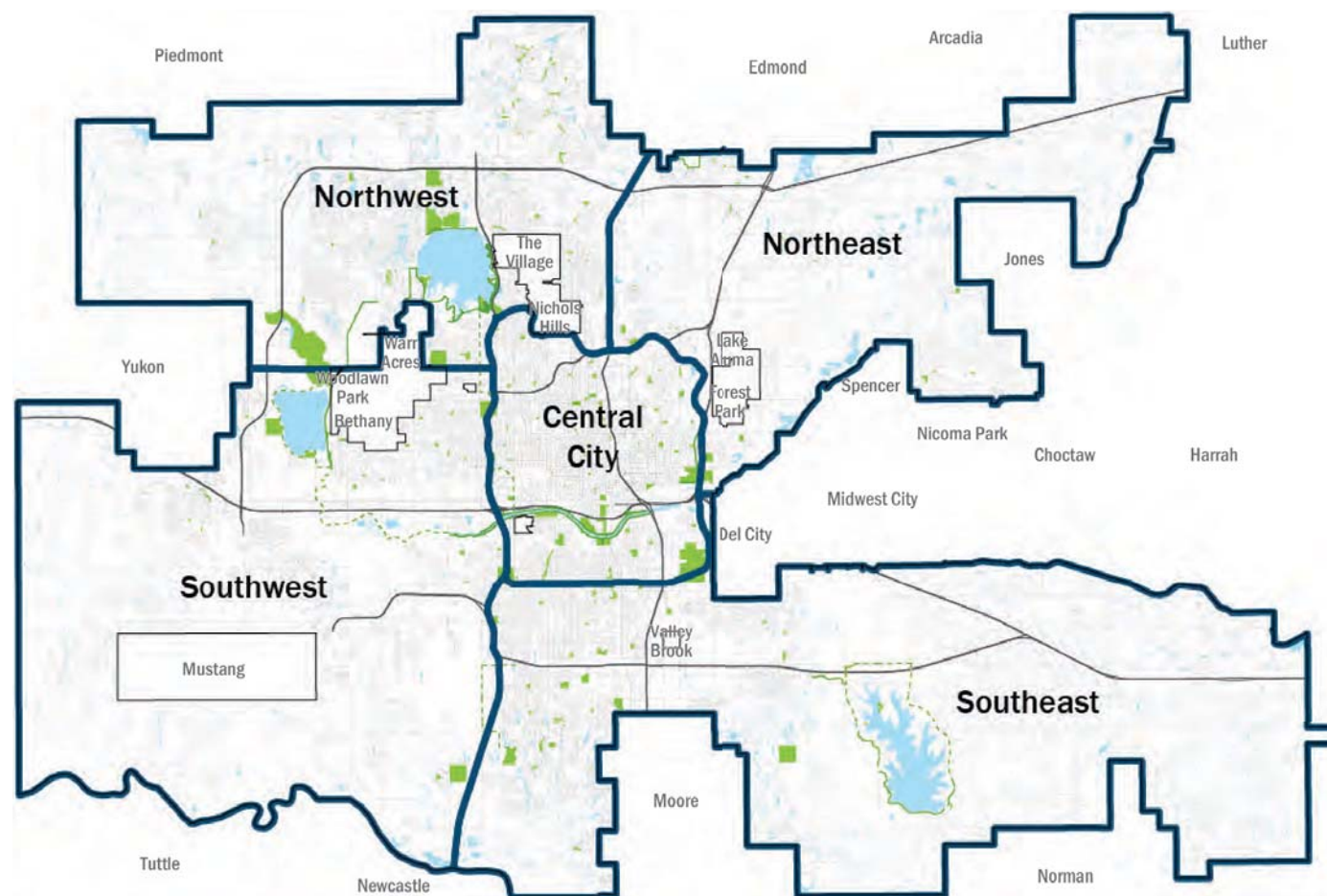


## Geographic Differences

The survey tallied responses across the city as a whole and by 5 geographic regions: central city, northwest, northeast, southwest, and southeast as shown in the map below. The following are key differences in responses among the geographic areas.

### Survey Results Analyzed by Subarea

Five Geographic Regions Used to Break Down Survey Results



**Parks and Recreation Programming**

- In the northeast, residents are more likely to rate the parks they have visited as being in good condition and less likely to rate them as being in excellent or fair condition.
- In the northeast, 2–4 times as many residents have participated in recreation programs offered by the Parks and Recreation Department in the last year.
- Citywide, 70% of residents rated the quality of programs they participated in as either good or excellent. In the northeast and southwest, this was 100%. In the central city, this was only 50%.

**How Residents Learn of Parks and Programming**

- In the northeast, residents are nearly 5 times as likely to learn about parks, programs, and activities from Parks and Recreation staff than in other parts of the city. Those in the northeast are also more likely than in other areas to learn about parks, programs, and activities from social media, flyers distributed at park and recreation facilities, and flyers distributed at schools. Those in the northwest are less likely to receive flyers distributed at schools, and those in the Southwest are less than half as likely to have conversations with Parks and Recreation staff. (Note: The ability to distribute flyers varies by school district.)

**Priority Parks and Facilities**

Citywide	Northwest	Northeast	Central City	Southwest	Southeast
1 Walking and Biking Trails (38%)	1 Walking and Biking Trails (40%)	1 Walking and Biking Trails (49%)	1 Walking and Biking Trails (34%)	1 Walking and Biking Trails (38%)	1 Walking and Biking Trails (41%)
2 Indoor Pool/Leisure Pool (21%)	2 Small Neighborhood Parks (25%)	2 Large Community Parks (29%)	2 Indoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities (22%)	2 Indoor Pool/Leisure Pool (29%)	2 Indoor Pool/Leisure Pool (27%)
3 Small Neighborhood Parks (21%)	3 Nature Center and Trails (22%)	3 Indoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities (23%)	3 Small Neighborhood Parks (21%)	3 Outdoor Pools/Aquatic Center (22%)	3 Small Neighborhood Parks (20%)
4 Indoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities (19%)	4 Large Community Parks (19%)	4 Nature Center and Trails (19%)	4 Outdoor Pools/Aquatic Center (19%)	3 Nature Center and Trails (22%)	3 Indoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities (20%)
5 Large Community Parks (18%)	5 Indoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities (17%)	4 Park Shelters and Picnic Areas (19%)	5 Large Community Parks (18%)	5 Small Neighborhood Parks (21%)	5 Outdoor Pools/Aquatic Center (18%)
		4 Outdoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities (19%)	5 Indoor Swimming/Leisure Pool (18%)		

**Type of Park**

- The northeast favors having small neighborhood parks over pocket parks (less than 2 acres) and community parks.

**Getting to Parks**

- In the northeast, 29% of residents would not get to a park by walking or bicycling, higher than the citywide 19%. Residents in the northeast are also less likely to drive to a park (10%) than in the city as a whole (6%).

**Funding**

- In the northeast, fewer people are very supportive of some increase in taxes to fund the types of parks, trails, and recreation facilities that are most important to them, and more are likely to not be sure or not be supportive.

**Quality of Life**

- In the central city, more people are likely to consider quality parks, facilities, and programs as being very important to the overall quality of life in Oklahoma City, and fewer consider them minimally important. In the southeast, more people are likely to consider quality parks, facilities, and programs as being minimally important to the overall quality of life.

Citywide, 70% of residents rated the quality of programs they participated in as either good or excellent.



Priority Programs

Citywide	Northwest	Northeast	Central City	Southwest	Southeast
1 Adult Fitness/Wellness Programs (22%)	1 Adult Fitness/Wellness Programs (24%)	1 Youth Sports Programs (19%)	1 Adult Fitness/Wellness Programs (22%)	1 Adult Fitness/Wellness Programs (21%)	1 Adult Fitness/Wellness Programs (27%)
2 Special Events/Festivals (17%)	2 Special Events/Festivals (20%)	2 Youth Summer Programs (16%)	2 Family Programs (21%)	2 Water Fitness Programs (18%)	2 Special Events/Festivals (21%)
3 Senior Programs (16%)	3 Nature/Environmental Programs (20%)	2 Adult Fitness/Wellness Programs (16%)	3 Senior Programs (19%)	3 Walking/Biking Groups (17%)	3 Senior Programs (18%)
4 Walking/Biking Groups (15%)	3 Adult Continuing Ed. Programs (20%)	2 Senior Programs (16%)	4 Walking/Biking Groups (18%)	4 Nature/Environmental Programs (16%)	4 Youth Summer Programs (16%)
5 Family Programs (14%)	5 Senior Programs (14%)	2 Special Events/Festivals (16%)	5 Youth Swim Programs (15%)	5 Special Events/Festivals (15%)	5 Adult Swim Programs (12%)
		2 Nature/Environmental Programs (16%)	5 Special Events/Festivals (15%)	5 Adult Continuing Ed. Programs (15%)	5 Adult Continuing Ed. Programs(12%)
		2 Outdoor Adventure Programs (16%)			
		2 Youth Swim Programs (16%)			

Priority Actions

Citywide	Northwest	Northeast	Central City	Southwest	Southeast
1 Upgrade Neighborhood Parks (28%)	1 Upgrade Neighborhood Parks (32%)	1 Upgrade Neighborhood Parks (23%)	1 Upgrade Neighborhood Parks (33%)	1 Purchase Land for Neighborhood Parks (24%)	1 Upgrade Neighborhood Parks (27%)
2 Build New Walking/Biking Trails (22%)	2 Build New Walking/Biking Trails (25%)	1 Improve Park Bike/Pedestrian Access (23%)	2 Develop New Senior Wellness Centers (27%)	1 Build New Walking/Biking Trails (24%)	2 Upgrade Community Parks (27%)
3 Upgrade Community Parks (21%)	3 Purchase Land for Neighborhood Parks (23%)	1 Develop New Senior Wellness Centers (23%)	3 Upgrade Community Parks (21%)	3 Upgrade Neighborhood Parks (22%)	3 Build New Walking/Biking Trails (21%)
4 Develop New Senior Wellness Centers (21%)	3 Upgrade Community Parks (23%)	1 Build New Walking/Biking Trails (23%)	4 Build New Walking/Biking Trails (19%)	4 Upgrade Community Parks (20%)	4 Youth Summer Programs (16%)
5 Purchase Land for Neighborhood Parks (19%)	5 Develop New Senior Wellness Centers (22%)	5 Plant Trees along Trails/in Parks (19%)	5 Upgrade Community Centers (16%)	4 Improve Park Bike/Pedestrian Access (20%)	5 Adult Swim Programs (12%)
			5 Build Outdoor Pools (16%)		5 Adult Continuing Ed. Programs(12%)



### 3. SETTING STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Significant input from stakeholders and the community confirm the importance of Oklahoma City's park system to the quality of life in and economic well-being of the city. The strategic directions that follow provide high-level guidance for the City and its partners in establishing new policies and programs, developing new partnerships, and allocating resources to maintain, improve, and leverage the park system for greater community benefit.



## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Through the community survey, citizens expressed clear needs and priorities for the park and recreation system in Oklahoma City. Interviews with stakeholders echoed the same needs and priorities. The following six strategic directions were synthesized to steer the city's park and recreation system toward meeting identified community needs. The order of the strategic directions reflects stakeholders' prioritization during a Strategic Planning Retreat in March 2013.

### 1. Maintain and improve physical assets of existing parks.

The Parks and Recreation Department is doing the most it can to maintain and improve existing parks. However, the Department's budget is not sufficient to maintain and improve current parks to the level needed to meet community needs.

### 2. Develop facilities and programs in existing parks to meet community needs.

The community parks and recreation survey asked citizens to rate support for improving various components of the parks and recreation system. The actions that received the highest support were upgrading existing neighborhood and community parks.

### 3. Improve access to existing parks.

The ability of residents to access parks on foot and by bicycle varies from neighborhood to neighborhood, due to sidewalk and trail availability and the location of access points into parks. New sidewalks, trails, and access points can improve access.

### 4. Promote and increase awareness of the value of parks.

Oklahoma City's parks provide essential and irreplaceable environmental, economic, and quality of life benefits to residents beyond serving as recreation spaces. Among these benefits, parks filter the air, recharge groundwater, increase the value of surrounding properties, attract businesses and new residents, foster a sense of community, and improve public health. Touting these and other benefits can strengthen support for parks and create a case for increased park system funding.

### 5. Develop new parks and facilities.

Oklahoma City is large in land area and growing in population. In both currently underserved areas and developing areas, new parks and facilities are needed to provide park access to all residents.

### 6. Establish agreements and standards for private parks and school parks.

To expand park access, the City of Oklahoma City should seek to more formally incorporate existing recreation spaces it does not own, including private parks and school parks, into the park system. By developing standards for these spaces, the City can ensure that a combination of City-owned and non-City-owned parks contribute to meeting community needs.

#### Reeling them in.

Local anglers wait for channel catfish, bluegill sunfish, and largemouth bass to bite at Edwards Park Lake.



## 4. PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

The 2005 *Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan* included a park typology for Oklahoma City. The 2013 *Parks Master Plan* leaves the typology largely unchanged. However, it does categorize the classifications into three tiers for the purpose of defining levels of service:

Local Parks	Regional Parks	Other Parks
<i>serve the needs of close-by neighborhoods</i>	<i>serve the needs of close-by neighborhoods and regional needs</i>	<i>integral to the park and recreation system but do not have a defined level of service</i>
Neighborhood Parks Community Parks School Parks	District Parks Metropolitan Parks	Greenspaces Greenways Nature Parks Special Use Parks

Each park classification includes a general description, a typical size range, a typical length of visit, access provisions, and a list of appropriate amenities for that type of park based on best practices and community input. The list of amenities is not meant to be prescriptive or exhaustive. The appropriate amenities for any individual park should be determined through a regular park master planning process that involves the community it is meant to serve. Some amenities or programming may be provided by neighborhood groups or other private partners. All parks should be designed to serve multiple age segments and continue to be designed for safety by following Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.

There are often a variety of ownership and management scenarios in urban parks, including publicly owned and operated, publicly accessible but privately owned and operated, and other public-private partnerships. The park classifications are applicable in all ownership and management scenarios. Existing privately-owned parks in Oklahoma City are considered local parks for determining level of service since they typically serve local recreation needs. The City should require new, privately-built parks part of new development to follow the City's design standards, be usable, and meet local recreation needs.

## LOCAL PARKS

### Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks are the basic unit of the park system and serve the informal recreation needs of residents within walking distance of their homes. Serving as the recreational focus of the neighborhood, these parks should balance informal active and passive spaces. In general, about half of the park's area should be planned for passive activities and natural features. Neighborhood parks have limited program activities and are not intended to attract users from outside the neighborhood. Neighborhood parks do not have restrooms.

#### Size

5–20 acres

#### Length of Visit

0.5–1.5 hours

#### Access

Neighborhood parks should be centrally located in residential neighborhoods and should be uninterrupted by non-residential roads or other physical barriers. They should front adjoining streets, providing visibility and enhanced security from surrounding uses. Parkland without frontage on public streets is not acceptable.

Neighborhood parks should be accessible by way of the city's trail network, sidewalks, or low-volume residential streets. Since they serve nearby residents, neighborhood parks tend to have limited or no associated parking beyond on-street or curbside parking.

**See Appendix A for a complete list of publicly-owned neighborhood parks in Oklahoma City.**

#### Amenities

Neighborhood input should be used to determine the program at neighborhood parks. Appropriate amenities include:

##### Passive Recreation

- Informal Practice Fields/Open Space
- Internal Walking Trails
- People Watching Areas
- Unique Landscape/Features
- Ornamental Gardens
- Community Gardens

##### Active Recreation

- Outdoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities
- Play Structures
- Creative Play Attractions
- Court Games
- Tennis Courts
- Volleyball Courts

##### Facilities

- Individual Picnic/Sitting Areas
- Group Picnic/Sitting Areas
- Park Shelters



**Providing neighborhoods with spaces for play.**

A playground at Reed Park.



## LOCAL PARKS

### Community Parks

Community parks are larger in size than neighborhood parks and serve several adjoining neighborhoods, attracting residents from a relatively large area. They should preserve unique landscapes and open spaces, allow for group activities, and offer recreation opportunities not feasible or desirable at the neighborhood level. As with neighborhood parks, they should be developed for both active and passive recreation activities. Community parks may have one or two revenue-producing facilities and a recreation center, gym, or senior center. They typically include a permanent and accessible public restroom.

#### Size

20–100 acres

#### Length of Visit

0.5–3 hours

#### Access

Community parks should be located in proximity to or within residential neighborhoods. They should front adjoining streets, providing visibility and enhanced security from surrounding uses. Public street frontage is desirable.

Community parks should be accessible by way of the city's trail network and sidewalks and be serviced by arterial and collector streets. Small parking lots located just off street may be necessary to supplement on-street and curbside parking.

**See Appendix A for a complete list of publicly-owned community parks in Oklahoma City.**



**Cooling off.**

A sprayground at Wiley Post Park.

#### Amenities

Neighborhood input should be used to determine master plan updates and programs offered at community parks. Appropriate amenities include:

#### Passive Recreation

- Informal Practice Fields/Open Space
- Internal Walking Trails
- People Watching Areas
- Unique Landscape/Features
- Nature Interpretation Areas
- Arboretum/Botanical Garden
- Ornamental Gardens
- Community Gardens

#### Active Recreation

- Biking Trails
- Outdoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities
- Creative Play Attractions
- Large Play Structures
- Court Games
- Tennis Courts
- Volleyball Courts
- Splash Pad/Spray Grounds

#### Facilities

- Individual Picnic/Sitting Areas
- Group Picnic/Sitting Areas
- Park Shelters
- Facilities for Plays or Concerts

## LOCAL PARKS

### School Parks

Schoolyards and their recreation facilities can be used for public open space that serve surrounding neighborhoods. Smaller elementary schools tend to include amenities geared towards children. Middle and high schools often also include tennis courts, practice and regulation playfields, and running tracks.

#### Size

5–30 acres

#### Length of Visit

0.5–1.5 hours

#### Access

School parks that are considered part of the park system are open to the general public outside of school hours, typically following park hours of operation established in the area. They are often administered and operated through joint use agreements between the appropriate school district and the Parks and Recreation Department. These spaces are meant to accommodate a variety of users.

School parks should front adjoining streets, providing visibility and enhanced security from surrounding uses. They should be accessible by way of the city's trail network, sidewalks, or low-volume residential streets. Schools may have parking lots for visitors and staff that can be used outside of school hours.

### Amenities

Amenities at school parks vary tremendously by school district. Appropriate amenities include:

#### Passive Recreation

- Informal Practice Fields/Open Space
- Internal Walking Trails
- People Watching Areas
- Unique Landscape/Features
- Nature Interpretation Areas
- Arboretum/Botanical Garden
- Ornamental Gardens
- Community Gardens

#### Active Recreation

- Biking Trails
- Outdoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities
- Play Structures
- Creative Play Attractions
- Large Play Structures
- Court Games
- Tennis Courts
- Volleyball Courts
- Splash Pad/Spray Grounds
- Outdoor Swimming Pools

#### Facilities

- Individual Picnic/Sitting Areas
- Group Picnic/Sitting Areas
- Park Shelters
- Facilities for Plays or Concerts

## REGIONAL PARKS

### District Parks

District parks serve a broader purpose than neighborhood or community parks and should be used to supplement local parks when they are not adequate to serve the needs of the community. District parks are focused on meeting community-based needs as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. They should be designed to generate revenue, with more than two revenue-producing facilities. Permanent public restrooms should be provided.

#### Size

150–250 acres

#### Length of Visit

1–3 hours

#### Access

District parks should be located within walking distance of some residential areas. However, high use activity areas should be separated from adjacent residential areas. The site should be serviced by arterial and collector streets and be easily accessible by way of public transit and the city's trail network. Parkland with frontage on public streets is desirable.

Parking lots should be located on site.

**See Appendix A for a complete list of publicly-owned district parks in Oklahoma City.**



**Offering unique landscapes.**

The Charles E. Sparks Rose Garden at Will Rogers Park.

#### Amenities

Appropriate amenities include:

##### Passive Recreation

- Informal Practice Fields/Open Space
- Internal Walking Trails
- People Watching Areas
- Unique Landscape/Features
- Nature Interpretation Areas
- Arboretum/Botanical Garden
- Ornamental Gardens
- Community Gardens

##### Active Recreation

- Biking Trails
- Outdoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities
- Play Structures
- Creative Play Attractions
- Large Play Structures
- Court Games
- Tennis Courts
- Volleyball Courts
- Regulation Playfields/Game Fields
- Regulation Sport Courts
- Splash Pad/Spray Grounds
- Outdoor Swimming Pools

##### Facilities

- Individual Picnic/Sitting Areas
- Group Picnic/Sitting Areas
- Park Shelters
- Facilities for Plays or Concerts
- Aquatic Center
- Multi-Generational Center
- Senior Wellness Center
- Indoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities

## REGIONAL PARKS

### Metropolitan Parks

Metropolitan parks serve the entire city and may also serve other communities within the metropolitan area as well as the state. These parks are generally established around natural resources, are typically located along waterways or near bodies of water, and have the potential for a wide range of uses. However, active areas should be located relatively close to one another with large surrounding areas of preserved natural or open space. They should be designed to generate revenue, with more than two revenue-producing facilities. Permanent public restrooms should be provided, with additional portable facilities added for large special events.

#### Size

25–350 acres

#### Length of Visit

1–4 hours

#### Access

The location of metropolitan parks is determined by resource availability and opportunity to utilize and/or protect the resource. They should be serviced by arterial and collector streets, be easily accessible by public transit and the city's trail network; and have reasonable expressway access when possible.

Parking lots should be located on site.

**See Appendix A for a complete list of publicly-owned metropolitan parks in Oklahoma City.**

### Amenities

Appropriate amenities include:

#### Passive Recreation

- Informal Practice Fields/Open Space
- Internal Walking Trails
- People Watching Areas
- Unique Landscape/Features
- Nature Interpretation Areas
- Arboretum/Botanical Garden
- Ornamental Gardens
- Community Gardens

#### Active Recreation

- Biking Trails
- Outdoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities
- Play Structures
- Creative Play Attractions
- Large Play Structures
- Court Games
- Tennis Courts
- Volleyball Courts
- Regulation Playfields/Game Fields
- Regulation Sport Courts
- Splash Pad/Spray Grounds
- Outdoor Swimming Pools
- Disc Golf Areas

#### Facilities

- Individual Picnic/Sitting Areas
- Group Picnic/Sitting Areas
- Park Shelters
- Facilities for Plays or Concerts
- Aquatic Center
- Multi-Generational Center
- Senior Wellness Center
- Indoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities
- Nature Center
- Boating Amenities



#### Taking a dip.

Young and old go for a swim at Earlywine Family Aquatic Center.

## OTHER PARKS

### Greenspaces

Greenspaces are typically small parcels of preserved open space, including street medians and streetscapes that increase the perception of openness and landscape within highly developed portions of the city. They often provide a buffer and enhance the character of the community. If used at all, they primarily provide areas for walking, dog walking, or jogging.

#### Size

varies

#### Length of Visit

varies

#### Access

Greenspaces, if usable, should be accessible from the city's trail network, sidewalks, or low-volume residential streets.

#### Amenities

Appropriate amenities include:

#### Passive Recreation

Unique Landscape/Features

**See Appendix A for a complete list of publicly-owned greenspaces in Oklahoma City.**

### Greenways

Greenways are narrow open space systems that tie park components together to form a cohesive park, recreation, and open space system. Within a natural environment, they allow for uninterrupted and safe pedestrian movement between parks throughout the community, provide people with a resource based outdoor recreational opportunity and experience, and can enhance property values. Greenways may follow natural resources like stream and river corridors. Others may follow abandoned railroad beds, old industrial sites, power line rights-of-way, pipeline easements, or parkway rights-of-way. Greenway locations are integral to the trail system plan and may be built as part of development projects or interconnected recreational and natural areas. Public restrooms should be provided at trail heads.

#### Size

varies

#### Length of Visit

0.25–1.5 hours

#### Access

Greenways should have access points where they cross local, arterial, and collector streets. They should be easily accessible by and integrated into the city's trail network.

#### Amenities

Appropriate amenities include:

#### Active Recreation

Biking Trails

Outdoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities

## OTHER PARKS

### Nature Parks

Nature parks are lands set aside primarily for the preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, visual aesthetics and buffering, or for wildlife habitat.

#### Size

varies

#### Length of Visit

1–3 hours

#### Access

Nature parks should have access points where they cross local, arterial, and collector streets. They should be easily accessible by the city's trail network.

Parking lots should be located on site but limited in size to minimize crowds at any one time.

See Appendix A for a complete list of publicly-owned nature parks in Oklahoma City.

### Amenities

Appropriate amenities include:

#### Passive Recreation

- Informal Open Space
- Internal Walking Trails
- Unique Landscape/Features
- Nature Interpretation Areas
- Arboretum/Botanical Garden
- Community Gardens

#### Active Recreation

- Biking Trails
- Outdoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities
- Play Structures

#### Facilities

- Individual Picnic/Sitting Areas
- Group Picnic/Sitting Areas
- Park Shelters
- Nature Center



**Learning about nature and wildlife.**

A class visits Martin Park Nature Center's education center, which showcases a variety of reptile and insect species.

## OTHER PARKS

### Special Use Parks

Special use parks cover a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single-purpose use. They can be individual sites or parts of larger parks and typically serve the entire city.

#### Size

varies

#### Length of Visit

varies

#### Access

Special use parks should be strategically located community-wide facilities rather than serve well-defined neighborhoods or areas. The site should be easily accessible from arterial and collector streets.

Parking lots should be located on site.

**See Appendix A for a complete list of publicly-owned special use parks in Oklahoma City.**



#### Reviving a downtown civic space.

Bicentennial Park, between the Civic Center Music Hall and City Hall, was upgraded ahead of its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012.

#### Amenities

Appropriate amenities include:

##### Passive Recreation

- Informal Practice Fields/Open Space
- Internal Walking Trails
- Unique Landscape/Features
- Nature Interpretation Areas
- Arboretum/Botanical Garden
- Ornamental Gardens
- Community Gardens

##### Active Recreation

- Biking Trails
- Outdoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities

##### Facilities

- Individual Picnic/Sitting Areas
- Group Picnic/Sitting Areas
- Park Shelters
- Facilities for Plays or Concerts
- Nature Center

## SUMMARY OF AMENITIES

The following table provides a summary of the amenities that are appropriate in each classification of park.

	Local Parks			Regional Parks		Other Parks			
	Neighborhood Parks	Community Parks	School Parks	District Parks	Metropolitan Parks	Greenspaces	Greenways	Nature Parks	Special Use Parks
<b>Passive Recreation</b>									
Informal Practice Fields/Open Space	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●
Internal Walking Trails	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●
People Watching Areas	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
Unique Landscape/Features	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●
Nature Interpretation Areas	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●
Arboretum/Botanical Garden	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●
Ornamental Gardens	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●
Community Gardens	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●
<b>Active Recreation</b>									
Biking Trails	○	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●
Outdoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●	●
Play Structures	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	○
Creative Play Attractions	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
Large Play Structures	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
Court Games	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
Tennis Courts	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
Volleyball Courts	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
Regulation Playfields/Game Fields	○	○	○	●	●	○	○	○	○
Regulation Sport Courts	○	○	○	●	●	○	○	○	○
Splash Pad/Spray Grounds	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
Outdoor Swimming Pools	○	○	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
Disc Golf Areas	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○
<b>Facilities</b>									
Individual Picnic/Sitting Areas	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●
Group Picnic/Sitting Areas	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●
Park Shelters	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●	●
Facilities for Plays or Concerts	○	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	●
Aquatic Center	○	○	○	●	●	○	○	○	○
Multi-Generational Center	○	○	○	●	●	○	○	○	○
Senior Wellness Center	○	○	○	●	●	○	○	○	○
Indoor Fitness/Exercise Facilities	○	○	○	●	●	○	○	○	○
Nature Center	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	●	●
Boating Amenities	○	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○



## CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a strategy of employing proper design, use, and management of the built environment to reduce the incidence and fear of crime, while improving community vitality and overall quality of life. The following ten principles are guidelines for achieving these results. The Parks and Recreation Department already follows and should continue to follow CPTED principles, as should others responsible for building and maintaining parks in Oklahoma City.

### Natural Surveillance

The design and placement of physical features, such as walkways, gathering areas, roadways, and structures, to eliminate hiding places and increase the perception of human presence or supervision.

### Natural Access Management

The physical guidance of people and vehicles through the use of barriers such as fencing or plantings, and other wayfinding elements such as lighting, signage, and artwork to orient people and provide a pedestrian-friendly environment to discourage would-be offenders.

### Territorial Reinforcement

The use of physical attributes such as art, signs, landscaping, and boundary treatments as well as the orientation and strategic placement of buildings to define borders, express ownership, and communicate a space is cared for and protected.

### Physical Maintenance

The repair, replacement, and general upkeep of a space, building, or area to maintain a clean and orderly environment and allow for the continued use of a space for its intended purpose.

### Order Maintenance

The attention to minor violations and reduction of opportunities for inappropriate behavior through posting rules and expectations, using graffiti- and vandalism-resistant materials, and imposing quick, fair, and consistent consequences for violations.

### Activity Support

The planning and placement of safe activities in key community areas to increase the number of people using a space, thereby enhancing visibility, social comfort, and control.

### Social Capital

The sense of community and civic engagement that can be fostered through designated gathering areas, social events, community programs, and communication protocols or equipment to encourage communication, trust, and collaboration among stakeholders and with the governmental agencies that serve them and to discourage inappropriate behaviors.

### Land Use and Community Design

The location of and relationship among land for various uses, densities, and intensities, that, when planned for and designed well, can improve the overall character of an area, ensure activity at different times of day, and result in built environments that increase public safety.

### Target Hardening

The making of potential targets resistant to criminal attack through reinforcement, law enforcement or security presence, and security devices such as locks, alarms, and cameras to increase the efforts that offenders must expend and the risk of their being identified or apprehended in committing an offense.

### Natural Imperatives

The ensured access to necessary goods and services including natural light, clean air and water, healthy foods, and physical activity to promote healthy behaviors and reduce mental fatigue and associated risky behaviors by meeting the biological, social, and economic needs of the population.

Adapted from "QuickNotes: Community CPTED," PAS QuickNotes No. 42, American Planning Association.



## 5. LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS

The 2005 *Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan* did a thorough, standards-based analysis of park service areas and park needs. However, that analysis did not take into account the transportation network for accessing parks or park access points. The 2013 *Parks Master Plan* does not revisit the standards identified in the previous plan but instead focuses on filling analysis gaps.

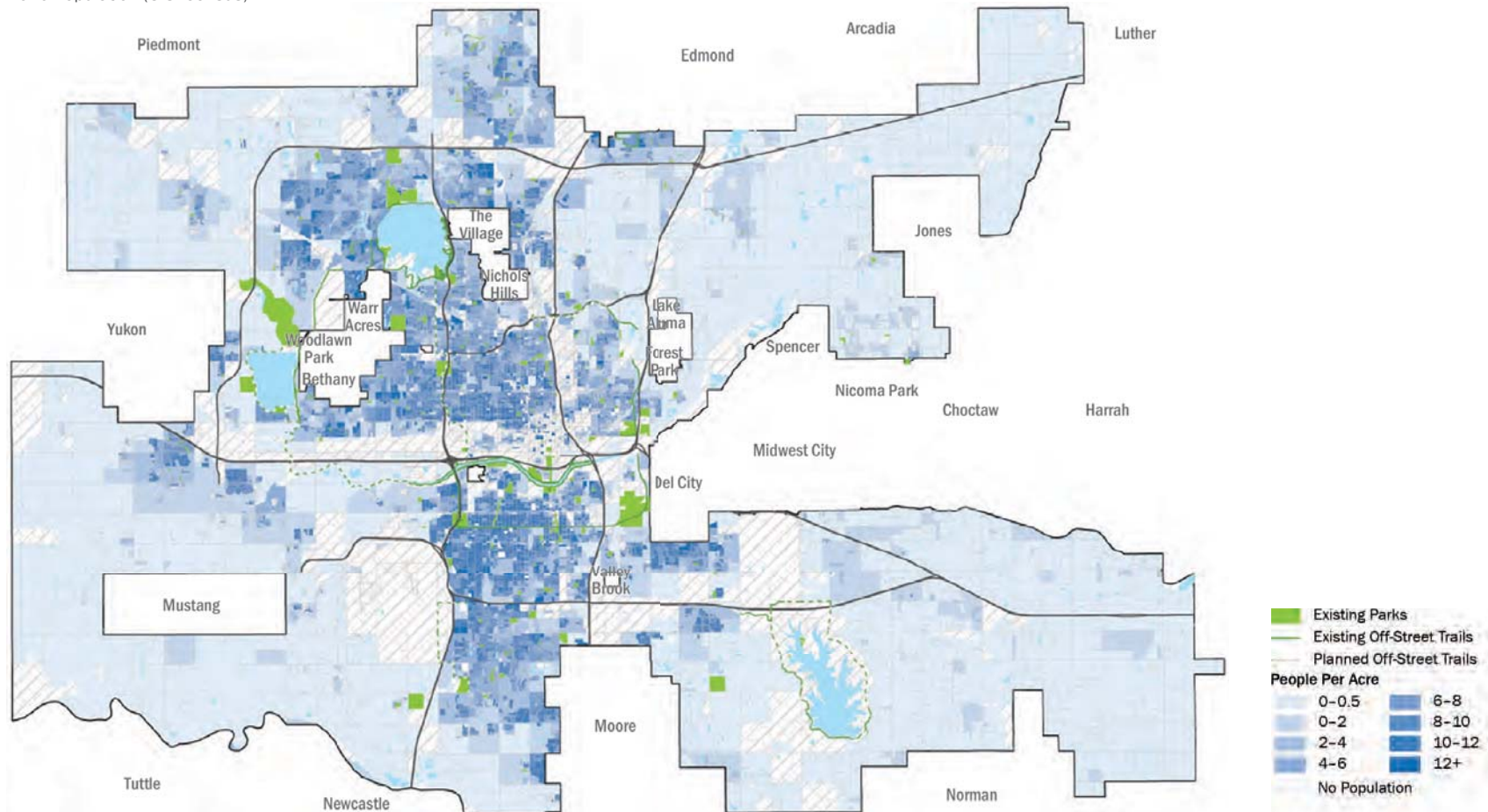
## LEVEL OF SERVICE TIERS

Oklahoma City’s park system has not grown uniformly as the city has grown. As a result, different areas of the city have different levels of park service. In some parts of the city, residents may be within a 5-minute walk of a park while in other parts of the city, residents may not be able to feasibly walk to a park at all.

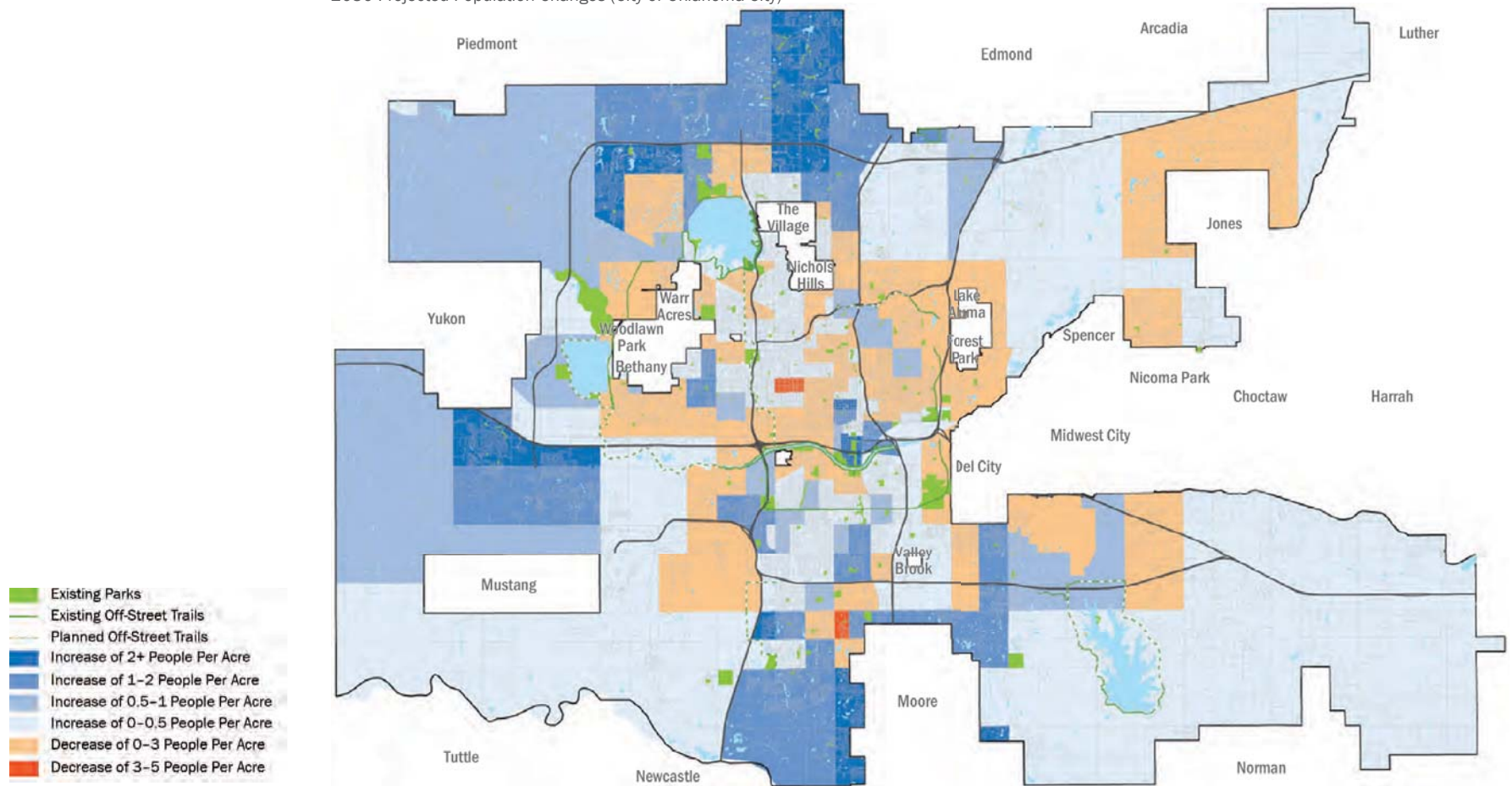
The level of service tiers in this plan balance the existing assets of the park system with locations of existing and projected population. The standards set for each tier reflect the location of existing parks and the budgetary constraints of developing new parks to increase service.

### Current Population Is More Heavily Clustered in the Center of the City

2010 Population (U.S. Census)



**Population is Expected to Decrease in the Central City and Increase at the Fringe**  
 2030 Projected Population Changes (City of Oklahoma City)



The four level of service tiers are:

**Central City Area** enclosed by the original Grand Boulevard loop

**Urban Area** Developed areas outside the central city

**Urban Growth Area** Area designated for future growth\*

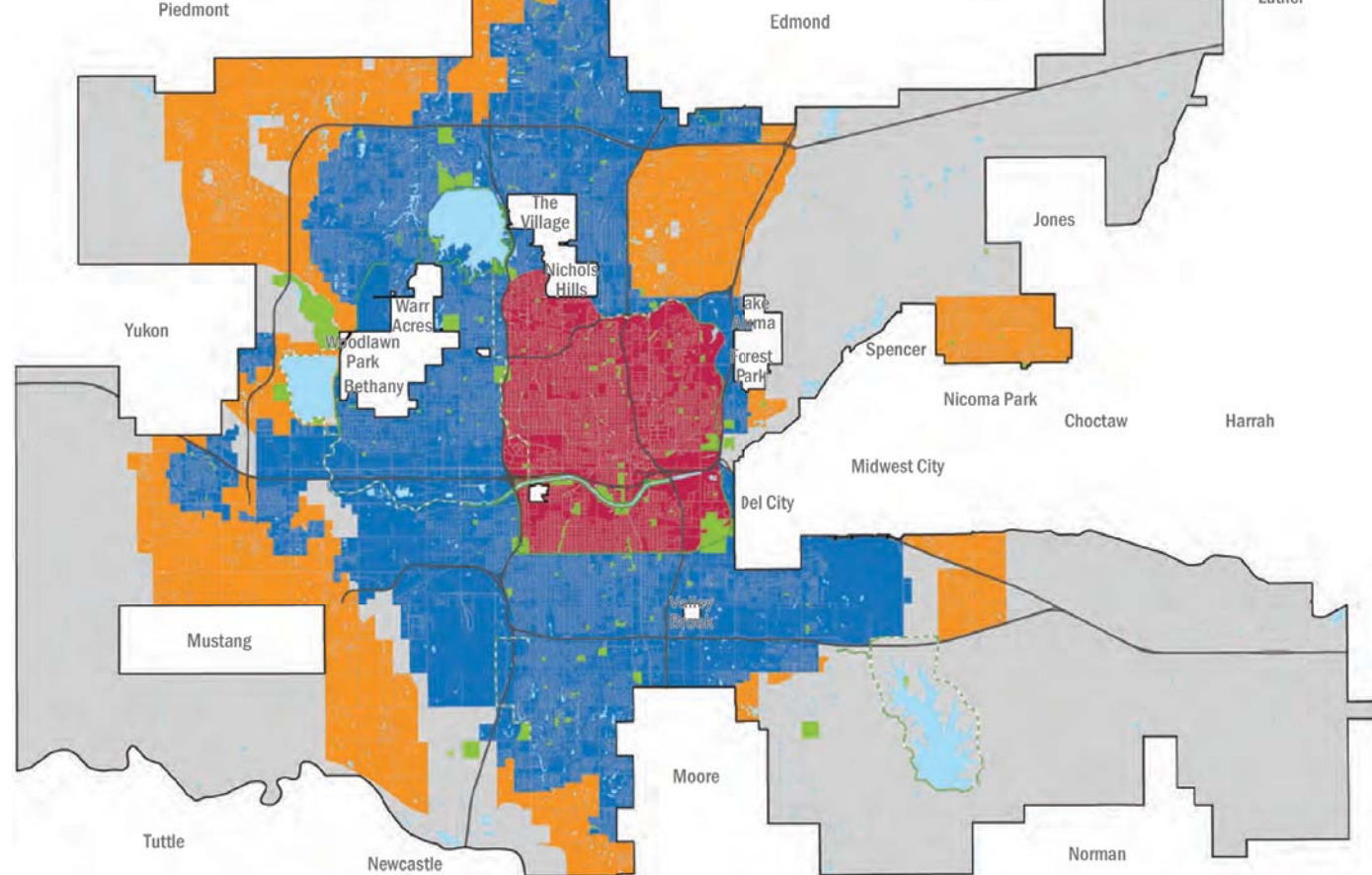
**Rural Area** Area outside of the urban growth area.

In each of the tiers, the City is making a commitment to provide the following levels of service, so residents and developers alike know what to expect. Each level of service tier has a standard for local

parks, regional parks, and trails. The standards take into account existing park locations and survey findings that indicate:

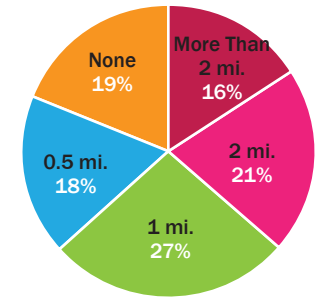
- driving and walking are the major ways of traveling to parks;
- a slight majority of residents do not feel there are sufficient parks and green space areas within walking distance of home;
- nearly two thirds of residents would walk or bike a mile or more to get to a park or recreation facility; and
- a majority of residents would drive 20 minutes or more to use a park or recreation facility.

**Four Level of Service Tiers**



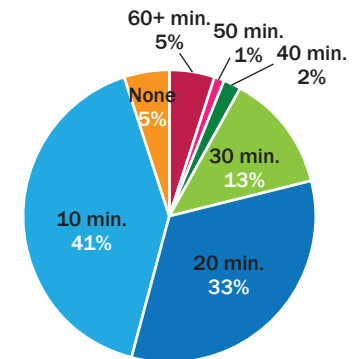
**Nearly Two Thirds Would Walk a Mile or More to Use a Park or Recreation Facility**

Maximum Walking or Biking Distance to Use a Park or Recreation Facility



**A Majority Would Drive 20 Minutes or More to Use a Park or Recreation Facility**

Maximum Driving Distance to Use a Park or Recreation Facility



\*The boundaries of the Urban Growth Area will change with the completion of planokc.

## LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS

The following tables include, for each level of service tier, a description of the standards for local parks, regional parks, and trails in that tier; an explanation of the current conditions in that tier that may impact the City’s ability to meet the standards; and a set of actions that the City could take to meet the standards in the future.

### Central City

	Standard	Existing Conditions	Meeting the Standard
Local Parks	All residents are within a half-mile, sidewalk- or trail-based walk of a local or regional park.	Most areas are well served by existing publicly-owned parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain existing parks.</li> <li>• Add access points to existing parks.</li> <li>• Enable access to existing school parks.</li> <li>• Require new development to meet the standard.</li> <li>• Encourage the development of private parks.</li> <li>• Build new public parks on a limited basis where no access exists to existing or new regional parks.</li> </ul>
Regional Parks	All residents are within a 2.5-mile drive of a regional park.	Most areas are well served by existing publicly-owned parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain existing parks.</li> <li>• Complete the Central Park.</li> <li>• Develop new publicly-owned parks, preferably in tandem with new privately-owned parks, new school parks, or other new public facilities.</li> </ul>
Trails	All residents are within 2.5 miles of a trail that is part of the citywide trail network (does not include isolated internal park trails).	Most areas are well served by existing trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain existing trails.</li> <li>• Complete planned trails.</li> <li>• Build new trails to create a connected trail system.</li> </ul>

## Urban Area

	Standard	Existing Conditions	Meeting the Standard
Local Parks	All residents are within a half-mile, sidewalk- or trail-based walk of a local or regional park.	Most areas are well served by existing publicly- and privately-owned parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain existing parks.</li> <li>• Add access points to existing parks.</li> <li>• Enable access to existing school parks.</li> <li>• Require new development to meet the standard.</li> <li>• Ensure new schools have accessible parks.</li> <li>• Build new public parks on a limited basis where no access exists to existing or new regional parks.</li> </ul>
Regional Parks	All residents are within a 5-mile drive of a regional park.	Some areas are well served by existing publicly-owned parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain existing parks.</li> <li>• Develop new publicly-owned parks, preferably in tandem with new privately-owned parks, new school parks, or other new public facilities.</li> </ul>
Trails	All residents are within 2.5 miles of a trail that is part of the citywide trail network (does not include isolated internal park trails).	Some areas are well served by existing trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain existing trails.</li> <li>• Complete planned trails.</li> <li>• Build new trails to create a connected trail system.</li> </ul>

## Urban Growth Area

	Standard	Existing Conditions	Meeting the Standard
Local Parks	All residents are within a one-mile, sidewalk- or trail-based walk of a local or regional park.	Few areas are well served by existing publicly- and privately-owned parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require new development to meet the standard with privately-owned parks.</li> <li>• Ensure new schools have accessible parks.</li> </ul>
Regional Parks	All residents are within a 15-mile drive of a regional park.	Few areas are well served by existing publicly-owned parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain existing parks.</li> <li>• Develop new publicly-owned parks, preferably in tandem with new privately-owned parks, new school parks, or other new public facilities.</li> </ul>
Trails	All residents are within 5 miles of a trail that is part of the citywide trail network (does not include isolated internal park trails).	Very few areas are well served by existing trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain existing trails.</li> <li>• Complete planned trails.</li> <li>• Build new trails to create a connected trail system.</li> </ul>



## Rural Area

	Standard	Existing Conditions	Meeting the Standard
Local Parks	All new residents are within a one-mile, sidewalk- or trail-based walk of a local or regional park.	Very few areas are well served by existing privately-owned parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require new development to meet the standard with privately-owned parks.</li> <li>• Ensure new schools have accessible parks.</li> </ul>
Regional Parks	All residents are within a 30-mile drive of a regional park.	Very few areas are well served by existing publicly-owned parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain existing parks.</li> </ul>
Trails	All residents are within 15 miles of a trail that is part of the citywide trail network (does not include isolated internal park trails).	Very few areas are well served by existing trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain existing trails.</li> <li>• Complete planned trails.</li> <li>• Build new trails to create a connected trail system.</li> </ul>



## 6. ANALYSIS AND APPLIED STANDARDS

This chapter applies the level of service standards to the existing system of local parks, regional parks, sidewalks, and trails within Oklahoma City. Planned parks, such as the MAPS 3 Downtown Public Park, were also included as part of the existing system. School parks were not included as part of the existing system but were included in the analysis to show how they can supplement the local park system if public access agreements are put in place. Parks in surrounding communities were not included in this analysis but may have relevance to the local park service in parts of Oklahoma City.

Local and regional publicly-owned parks are based on the Parks and Recreation Department's classifications. Sidewalks are implicit in the application of the local park standard, since it is the only standard based on walking distance. All local and regional publicly-owned parks are considered local for applying the local park standard, since a regional park may be a neighborhood's closest park. Privately-owned parks are also considered local parks.

The numbers of residents served now and in the future were determined by overlaying the areas served and the potential areas served with current and projected population figures.

## LOCAL PARK AND SIDEWALK ACCESS

Local park standards for each of the level of service tiers were applied using the current park system. In the map to the right, dark blue areas are served by the current park system using the standards. Assuming additional sidewalks and access points were added to maximize access to the current park system, the purple areas would also meet the standards. Finally, assuming access was made available to school parks, the orange areas would also meet the standards.

Nearly half of the residents in the central city are well served, but outside the central city, not many are served. Overlaying these areas with 2010 and projected 2030 population showed that more than double the residents who are currently served based on the target levels of service could be served without building any additional new parks.

The central city, urban area, and rural area do not see significant changes in level of service due to projected population changes between 2010 and 2030. The urban growth area, however, sees a reduction in level of service in that period, due to new development that would not be served by current local parks.

Circled areas are existing concentrations of population in the central city or urban area that do not have additional potential access via new sidewalks or access points to existing parks or via access to school parks. These areas should be studied for ways to provide better access to existing parks or considered for new local parks.

### Local Park Service Could More Than Double without Adding New Parks

Cumulative Population Numbers and Percentages in Areas Meeting and Potentially Meeting Level of Service Standards

	Oklahoma City		Central City		Urban Area		Urban Growth		Rural Area	
<b>2010</b>										
Population Served by Current Park System	104,089	18%	55,229	45%	46,577	13%	2,037	4%	246	1%
+ Population Served with Sidewalks Retrofits and New Access Points	224,337	39%	83,731	69%	127,842	36%	7,827	15%	4,937	10%
+ Population Served with Access to School Parks	278,492	48%	99,504	82%	163,818	46%	10,061	19%	5,109	10%
<b>2030</b>										
Population Served by Current Park System	100,237	16%	56,699	46%	60,720	14%	4,316	4%	350	0%
+ Population Served with Sidewalks Retrofits and New Access Points	258,967	35%	86,418	70%	153,967	36%	11,258	11%	7,324	8%
+ Population Served with Access to School Parks	318,466	43%	100,952	82%	194,679	45%	15,210	15%	7,625	9%

Below is a summary of actions for meeting the local park level of service standard in each level of service tier (Chapter 5).

### Central City

- Maintain existing parks. (dark blue area)
- Retrofit streets with sidewalks. (purple area)
- Add access points to existing parks. (purple area)
- Enable access to existing school parks. (orange area)
- Require new development to meet the standard.
- Encourage the development of private parks.
- Build new public parks on a limited basis where no access exists to existing or new regional parks. (pink area)

### Urban Area

- Maintain existing parks. (dark blue area)
- Retrofit streets with sidewalks as opportunities arise. (light blue area)
- Add access points to existing parks. (purple area)
- Enable access to existing school parks. (orange area)
- Require new development to meet the standard.
- Ensure new schools have accessible parks.
- Build new public parks on a limited basis where no access exists to existing or new regional parks. (pink area)

### Urban Growth Area

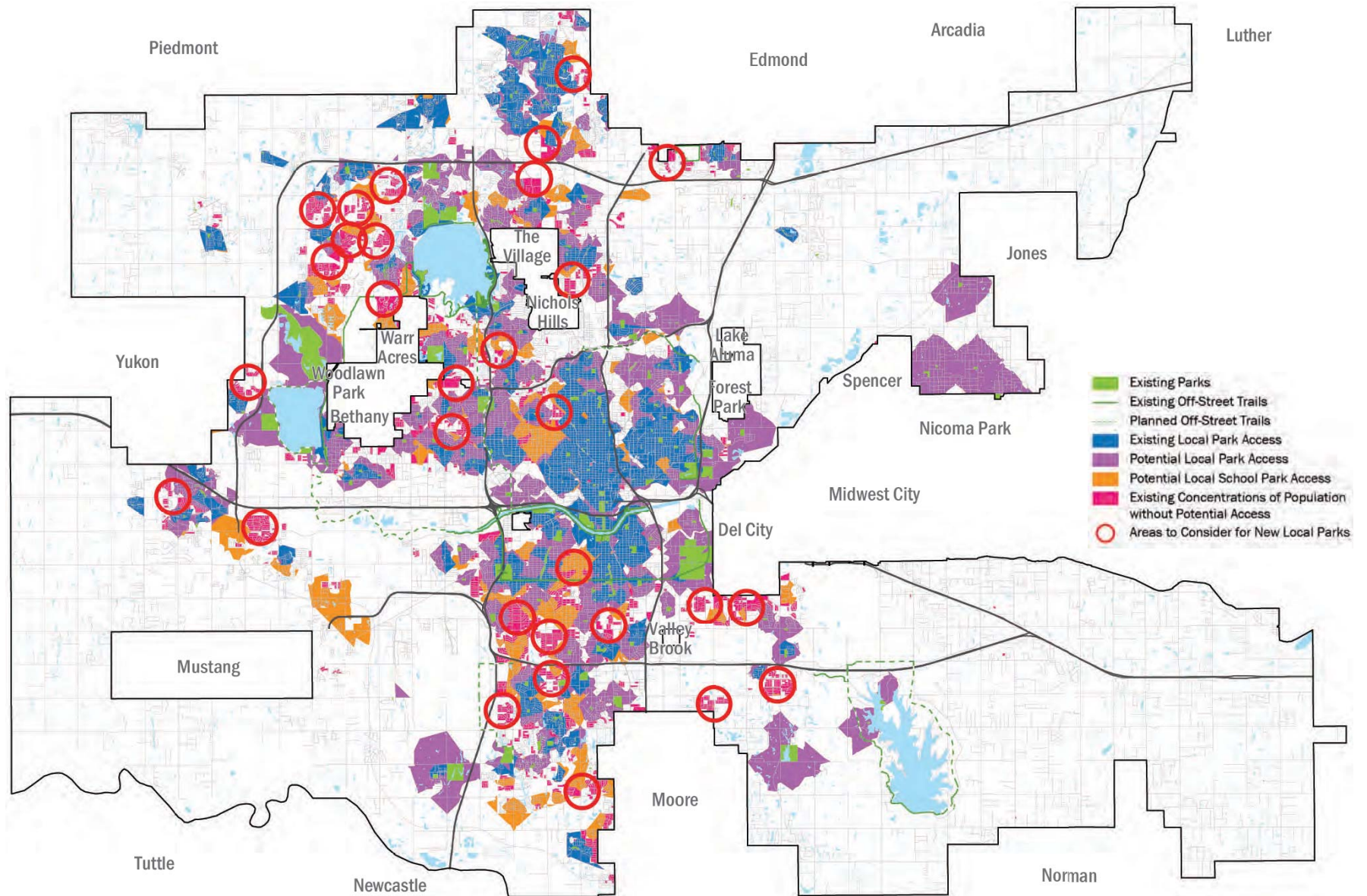
- Require new development to meet the standard with privately-owned parks.
- Ensure new schools have accessible parks.

### Rural Area

- Require new development to meet the standard with privately-owned parks.
- Ensure new schools have accessible parks.

More than double the residents who are currently served by local parks based on the target levels of service could be served without building any additional new parks.

Areas of Oklahoma City Currently and Potentially Well-Served by Local Parks



## REGIONAL PARK ACCESS

Regional park standards for each of the level of service tiers were applied to the current park system. In the map to the right, dark blue areas are served by the current park system using the standards. Assuming additional sidewalks and access points were added to maximize access to the current park system, purple areas would also meet the standards.

Almost all of the city’s land area and an overwhelming majority of residents are served by regional parks based on the level of service standards. Overlaying the areas meeting the standards with 2010 and projected 2030 population showed that adding access points to existing regional parks only slightly increases the number of residents not currently served who could be served without building any additional new parks.

The central city does not see a significant change in level of service due to projected population changes between 2010 and 2030. However, the urban area, urban growth area, and rural area do see reductions in level of service in that period, due to new development that would not be served by the current system of regional parks.

Circled areas are existing concentrations of population or projected growth areas in the central city or urban area that do not have additional potential access via new sidewalks or access points to existing parks. These areas should be studied for ways to provide better access to existing parks or considered for new regional parks.

Below is a summary of actions for meeting the regional park level of service standard in each level of service tier (Chapter 5).

### Central City

- Maintain existing parks. (dark blue area)
- Complete the Central Park. (included as existing in the analysis)
- Develop new publicly-owned parks, preferably in tandem with new privately-owned parks, new school parks, or other new public facilities. (pink and white areas)

### Urban Area

- Maintain existing parks. (dark blue area)
- Develop new publicly-owned parks, preferably in tandem with new privately-owned parks, new school parks, or other new public facilities. (pink and white areas)

### Urban Growth Area

- Maintain existing parks. (dark blue area)
- Develop new publicly-owned parks, preferably in tandem with new privately-owned parks, new school parks, or other new public facilities. (pink and white areas)

### Rural Area

- Maintain existing parks. (dark blue area)

An overwhelming majority of residents are served by existing regional parks based on the level of service standards.

### Regional Parks Already Serve Most of the Population, but Future Growth Will Not Be Well Served

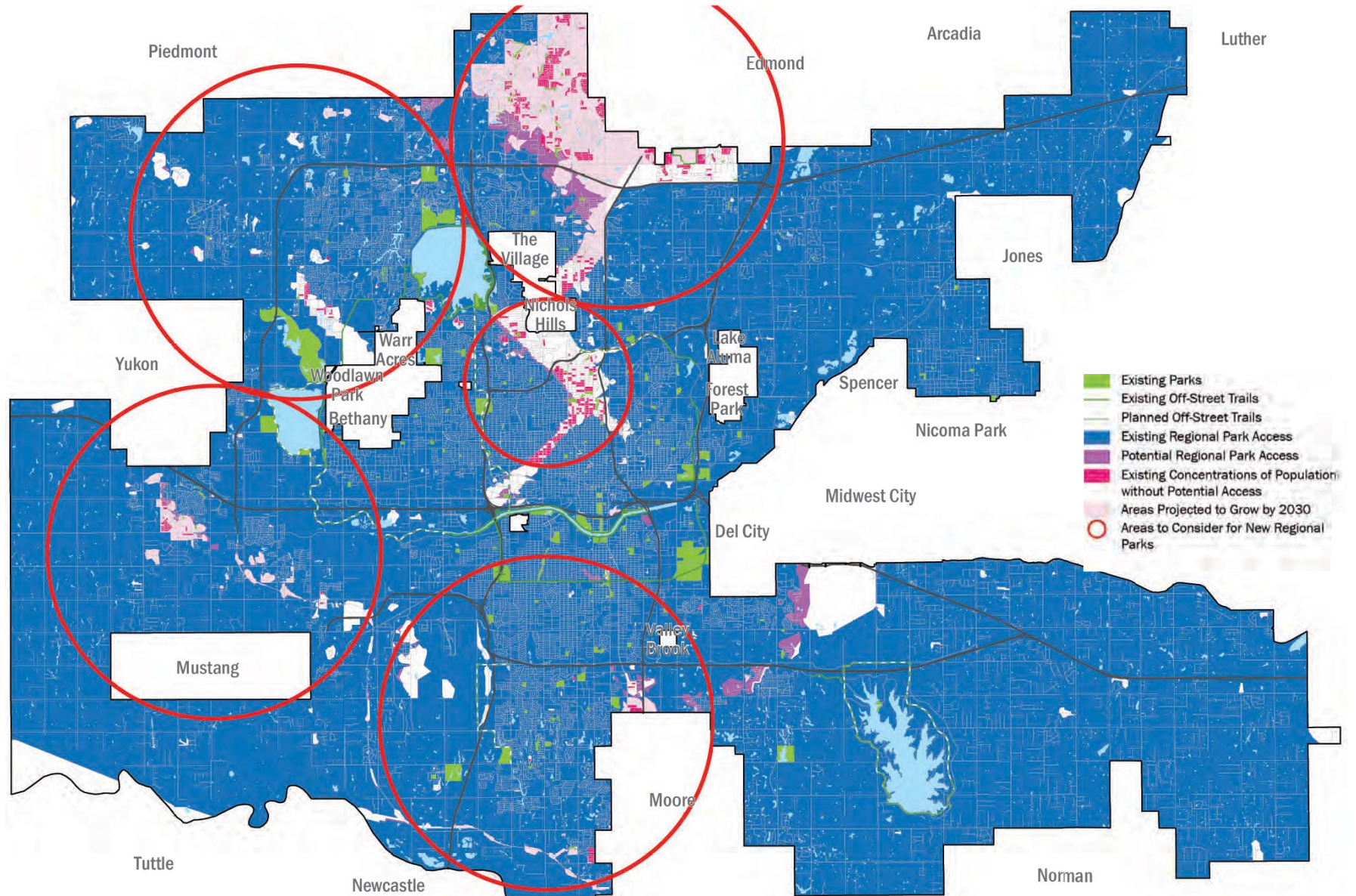
Cumulative Population Numbers and Percentages in Areas Meeting and Potentially Meeting Level of Service Standards

2010	Oklahoma City		Central City		Urban Area		Urban Growth		Rural Area	
Population Served by Current Regional Park System	496,336	86%	99,408	82%	297,875	84%	51,451	96%	47,602	97%
+ Population Served with New Access Points	507,545	88%	102,149	84%	306,247	86%	51,548	97%	47,602	97%

2030	Oklahoma City		Central City		Urban Area		Urban Growth		Rural Area	
Population Served by Current Regional Park System	513,213	69%	101,814	82%	302,777	70%	51,227	51%	57,395	65%
+ Population Served with New Access Points	529,492	71%	104,592	85%	316,066	73%	51,440	51%	57,395	65%

Areas of Oklahoma City Currently and Potentially Well-Served by Regional Parks

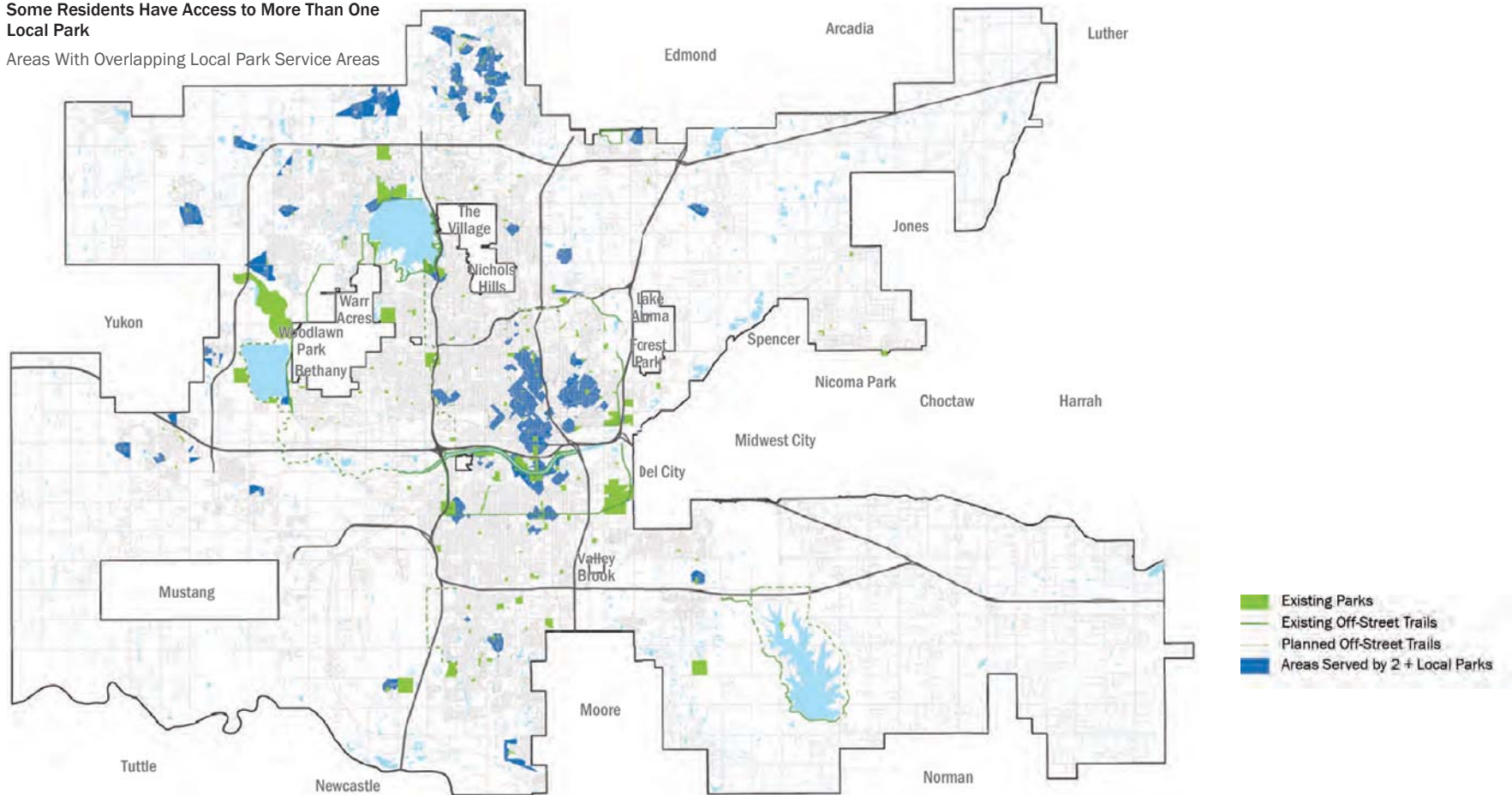


## AREAS SERVED BY MORE THAN ONE LOCAL PARK

The individual service areas for each local park were overlaid to determine areas with access to more than one park. These areas of overlap could be studied in further detail to determine if there are more parks than necessary to serve the population.

### Some Residents Have Access to More Than One Local Park

Areas With Overlapping Local Park Service Areas





## TRANSIT ACCESS TO PARKS

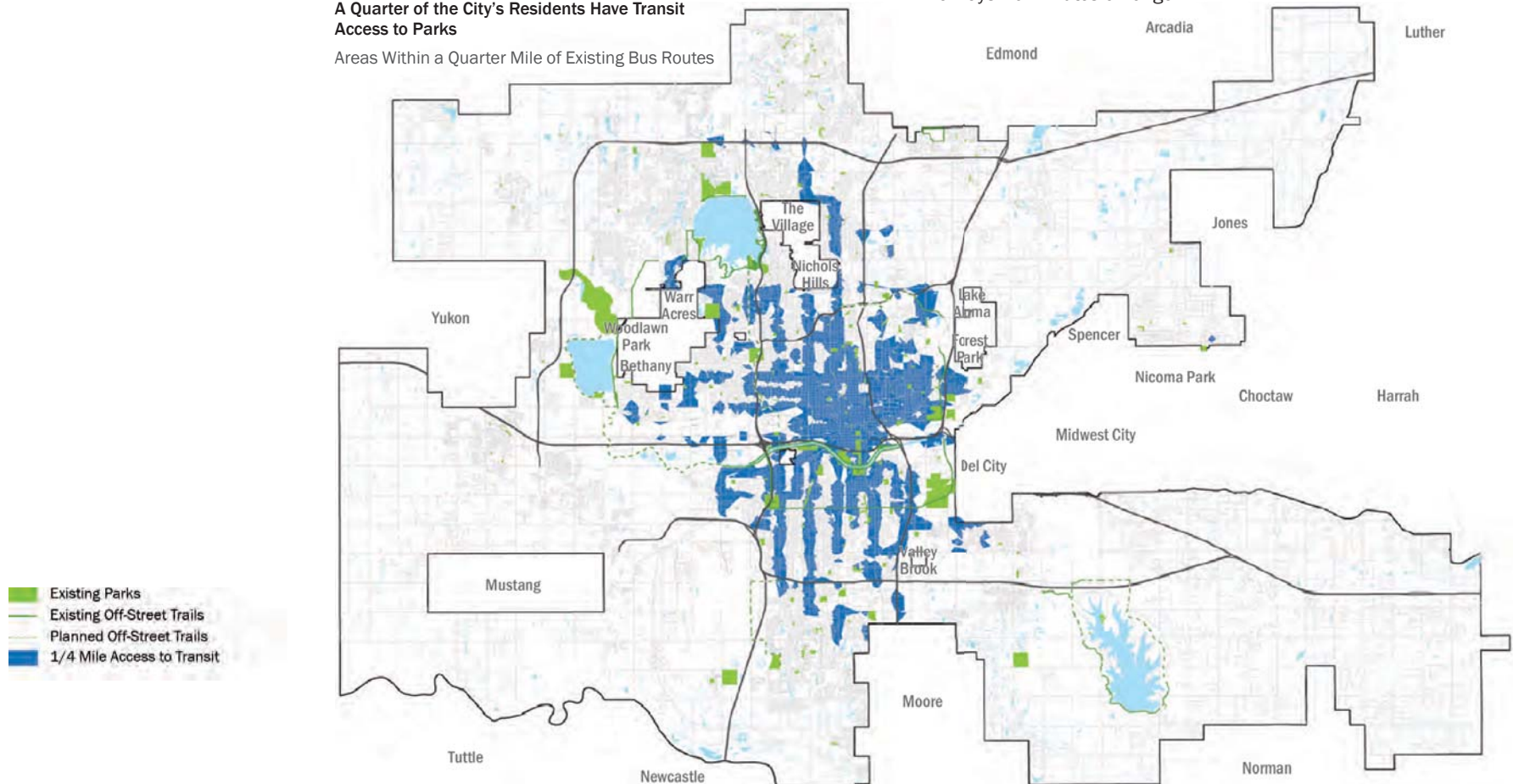
Transit-accessible parks were defined as those adjacent to or within a quarter-mile (5-minute) walk of existing bus routes. Areas with access to transit-accessible parks were defined as areas adjacent to or within a quarter-mile (5-minute) walk of existing bus routes.

Using these definitions, 110 parks are accessible by transit. A quarter of the 2010 population and 20% of the projected 2030 population are within areas that are transit-accessible to parks. Six of the transit-accessible parks are very highly accessible, served by

8 or more routes: Bicentennial Park, Couch Park, Kerr Park, Myriad Botanical Gardens, Red Andrews Park, and Draper Memorial Park. Not surprisingly, these parks are located near the Downtown Transit Center, which serves as the hub for all bus service.

Frequency of service is not accounted for in this analysis. About two-thirds of the city's bus routes have 30-minute headways during peak hours, though during off peak hours, headways may be longer than an hour. About a third of the bus routes have headways that are always 40 minutes or longer.

**A Quarter of the City's Residents Have Transit Access to Parks**  
 Areas Within a Quarter Mile of Existing Bus Routes



## DEMOGRAPHICS

In order to better understand the access of particular segments of the population to existing parks, a demographic analysis was performed to identify areas of the city with higher than average concentrations of particular age, ethnicity, income groups, and Wellness Scores. For most age and ethnicity cohorts, the population is relatively evenly distributed across the city, with some small pockets of concentration. However, four significant patterns were observed.

### African American Population

About 15% of the city's population is African American (2010 Census). This population is highly concentrated in the northeast quadrant of the city, in a corridor stretching from College Park to Carverdale, around NE 63rd Street and N Sooner Road, and around NE 50<sup>th</sup> Street and N Anderson Road.

Overlaying this on current park access maps, the North Highland to Carverdale is well served, but the areas around NE 63<sup>rd</sup> Street and N Sooner Road and around NE 50<sup>th</sup> Street and N Anderson Road are not. However, the latter area is a low-density rural community with two parks in the vicinity.

### Hispanic Population

About 17% of the city's population is Hispanic (2010 Census). This population is highly concentrated in the southern part of the city, within the loop formed by NW 10<sup>th</sup> Street, I-35, I-240, and MacArthur Boulevard.

Overlaying this on current park access maps, most of the Hispanic population in the loop is well-served. Smaller pockets around SW 29<sup>th</sup> Street and S County Line Road, NW 122<sup>nd</sup> Street and N County Line Road, and where I-35 meets NE 63<sup>rd</sup> Street are not well served. However, the first two are also low-density rural areas.

### Median Income

The median household income in Oklahoma City is about \$45,000 (2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates).

Household incomes are significantly higher outside the inner city than within the inner city, with the exception of the Heritage Hills area.

Overlaying this on current park access maps, most lower income households within the inner core of the city are well served, while the higher income households on the edges of the city are not as well served.

### Wellness Scores

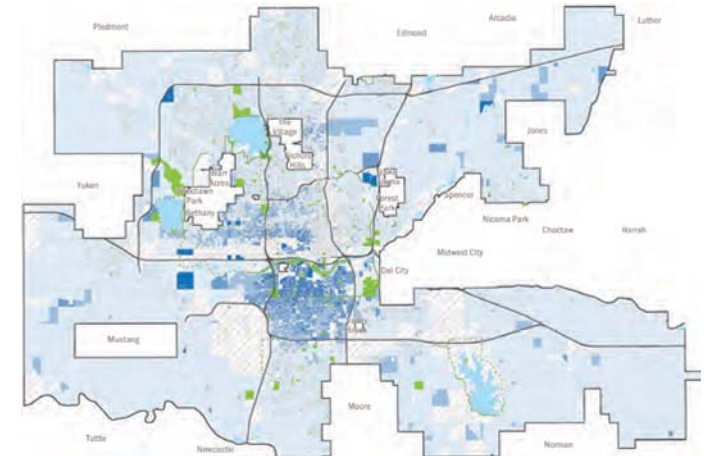
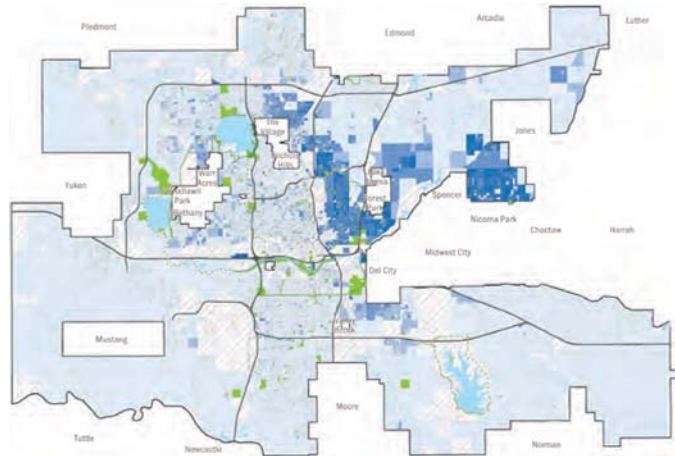
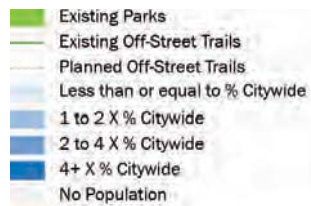
The Oklahoma City-County Health Department's Wellness Score is an aggregate measure of the determinants of community health such as socioeconomic, educational, environmental, cultural, and infrastructure factors as well as the overall health of the community. Wellness scores are significantly higher outside the inner city than within the inner city.

Overlaying this on current park access maps, most areas with a low wellness score are well served, while areas with high wellness scores are not as well served. This would appear to be counterintuitive, since one would assume access to parks would correlate with higher wellness scores. In fact, stakeholders demonstrated this misperception in expressing a concern that obesity is related to lack of access to parks. However, good access does not necessarily mean people are using parks for health benefits. Oklahoma City continues to compare poorly as a city in terms of health and fitness. It ranked last in the American College of Sports Medicine's American Fitness Index of the 50 largest metropolitan areas in the country. This indicates that an awareness campaign about how parks can be used to improve individuals' health may be necessary, coupled with improved fitness and wellness facilities and programs (a need identified through the community survey).

**Four Significant Demographic Patterns Were Observed**

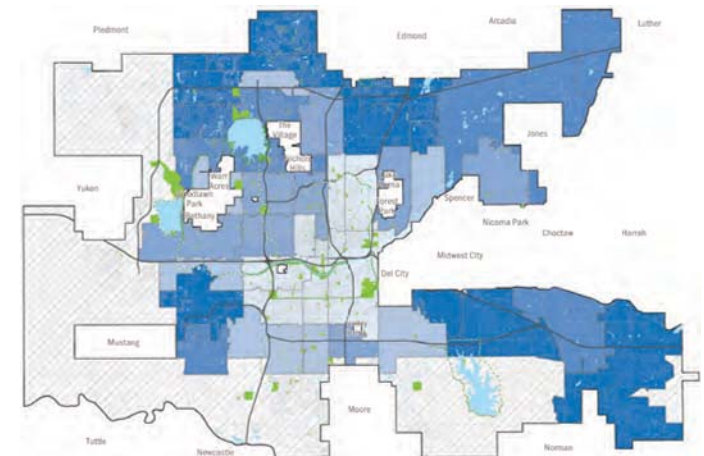
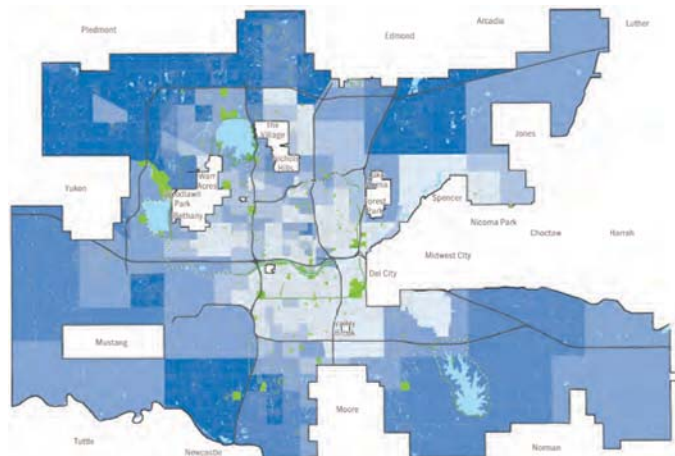
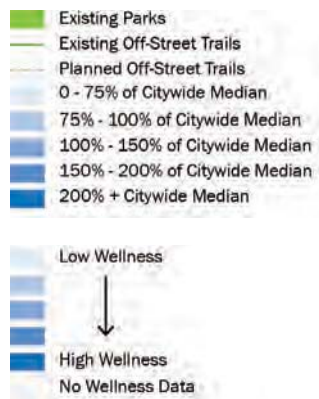
Concentration of African American Population

Concentration of Hispanic Population



Relation of Household Incomes to Citywide Median

Wellness Scores



## OFF-STREET TRAIL ACCESS

Trail standards for each of the level of service tiers were applied to the current trail system. In the map to the right, dark blue areas are served by the current trail system (solid green lines) based on the level of service standards. Assuming additional access points were added to maximize access to the current trail system and the previously planned trail system (dashed green lines) was completed, the purple areas would also meet the standards.

A majority of residents are served by trails based on the level of service standards. Overlaying the areas meeting the standards with 2010 and projected 2030 population showed that adding access points and previously planned trails to the system would increase the number of residents served by about 35%.

The central city and rural area do not see a significant change in level of service due to projected population changes between 2010 and 2030. However, the urban area and urban growth area do see reductions in level of service in that period, due to new development that would not be served by the current system of trails.

Solid and dashed red lines are meant to show only potential connections, not specific routes. Solid red lines are potential near-term trail connections that should be considered to connect existing and planned trails to existing or projected concentrations of population in the central city or urban area where access cannot be increased via new sidewalks or by adding access points to existing trails. Dashed red lines are potential long-term trail connections.

### Trail Service Could Increase by More Than 35% without Adding New Off-Street Trails

Cumulative Population Numbers and Percentages in Areas Meeting and Potentially Meeting Level of Service Standards

	Oklahoma City		Central City		Urban Area		Urban Growth		Rural Area	
<b>2010</b>										
Population Served by Current Off-Street Trail System	297,702	51%	69,240	57%	163,919	46%	20,592	39%	43,951	90%
+ Population Served with Planned Trails, Sidewalks Retrofits, and New Access Points	411,612	71%	106,441	87%	230,946	65%	30,274	57%	43,951	90%
<b>2030</b>										
Population Served by Current Off-Street Trail System	360,845	62%	73,871	60%	173,700	40%	32,587	33%	80,687	92%
+ Population Served with Planned, Trails, Sidewalks Retrofits, and New Access Points	489,653	84%	109,482	88%	249,247	58%	50,237	50%	80,687	92%

Below is a summary of actions for meeting the trail level of service standard in each level of service tier (Chapter 5).

### Central City

- Maintain existing trails. (dark blue area)
- Complete planned trails. (included as existing in the analysis)
- Build new trails to create a connected trail system. (all areas)

### Urban Area

- Maintain existing trails. (dark blue area)
- Complete planned trails. (included as existing in the analysis)
- Build new trails to create a connected trail system. (all areas)

### Urban Growth Area

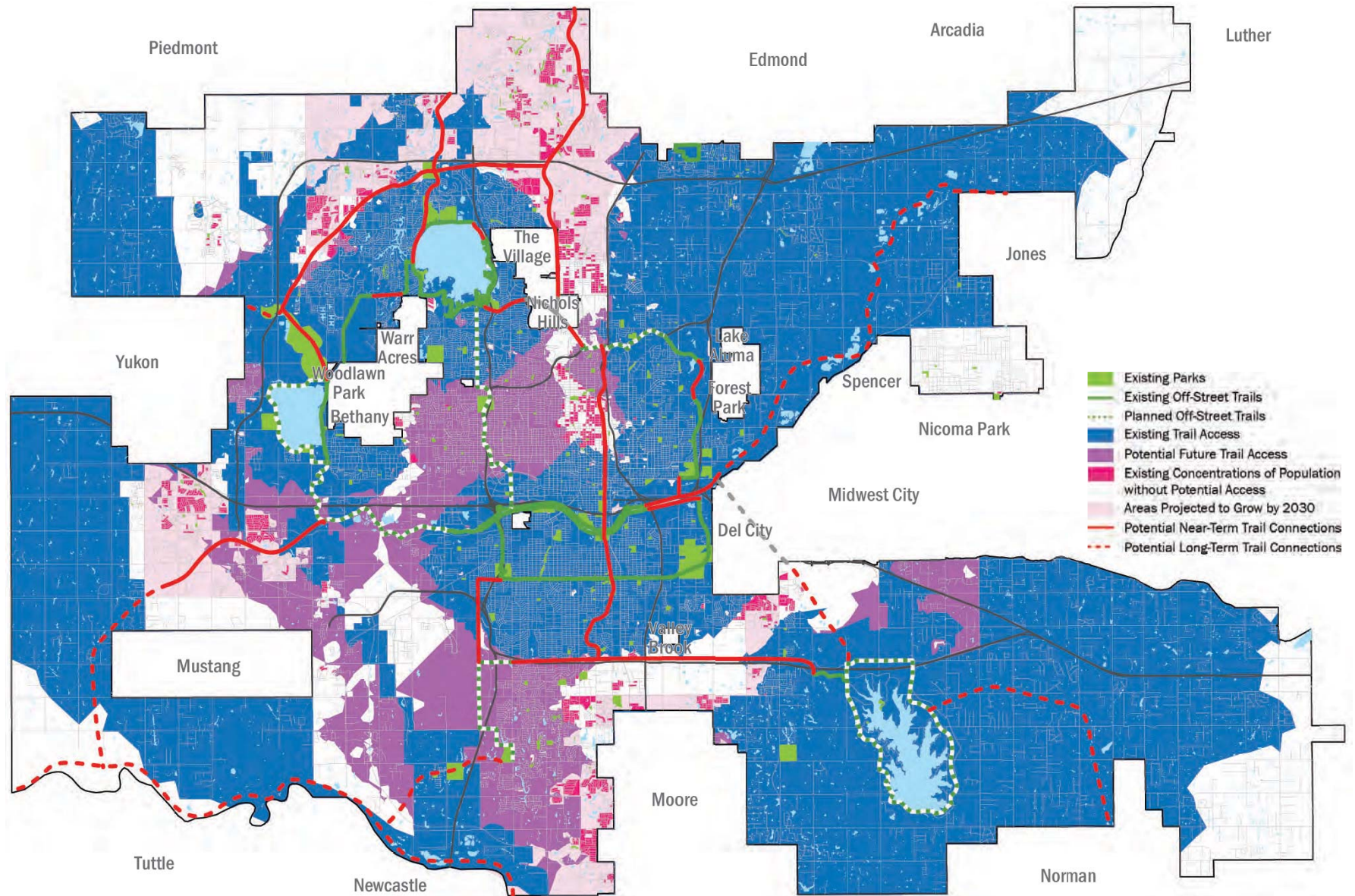
- Maintain existing trails. (dark blue area)
- Complete planned trails. (included as existing in the analysis)
- Build new trails to create a connected trail system. (all areas)

### Rural Area

- Maintain existing trails. (dark blue area)
- Complete planned trails. (included as existing in the analysis)
- Build new trails to create a connected trail system. (all areas)

Adding access points and previously proposed trails to the system would increase the number of residents served by about 35%.

Areas of Oklahoma City Currently and Potentially Well-Served by Off-Street Trails



## CONNECTIVITY

Parks provide numerous benefits to the neighborhoods they serve, but an interconnected system of parks provides additional benefits, namely alternative transportation options and access to a greater variety of park and recreation experiences.

Park connectivity was measured by looking at the proximity of public parks and trails to each other. Adjacent parks, including ones that may be located across a street from one another, were considered connected. Trails that go through or are adjacent to parks were also considered connected. All parks and trails connected to each other were grouped into clusters. There are currently 4 major clusters of connected parks and trails, shown in dark green:

1. Oklahoma River Trails and South Grand Trail and adjacent parks, including River Park, Elm Grove Park, Wheeler Park, Core to Shore Park, Wiley Post Park, Woodson Park, Brock Park, Oliver Park, Draper Park, and Trospen Park
2. Katy Trail and adjacent parks Douglass Park, Washington Park, Lincoln Park, and Creston Hills Park
3. Lake Overholser Trail and adjacent Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge and Route 66 Park
4. Lake Hefner Trail and adjacent parks Pat Murphy Park, Bluff Creek Park, Stars & Stripes Park, Lakeshore Estates Park, and Lion's Park

Adding in already proposed off-street trails would link clusters 1, 3, and 4 above, add Will Rogers Park, and create the following 3 new clusters, shown in light green:

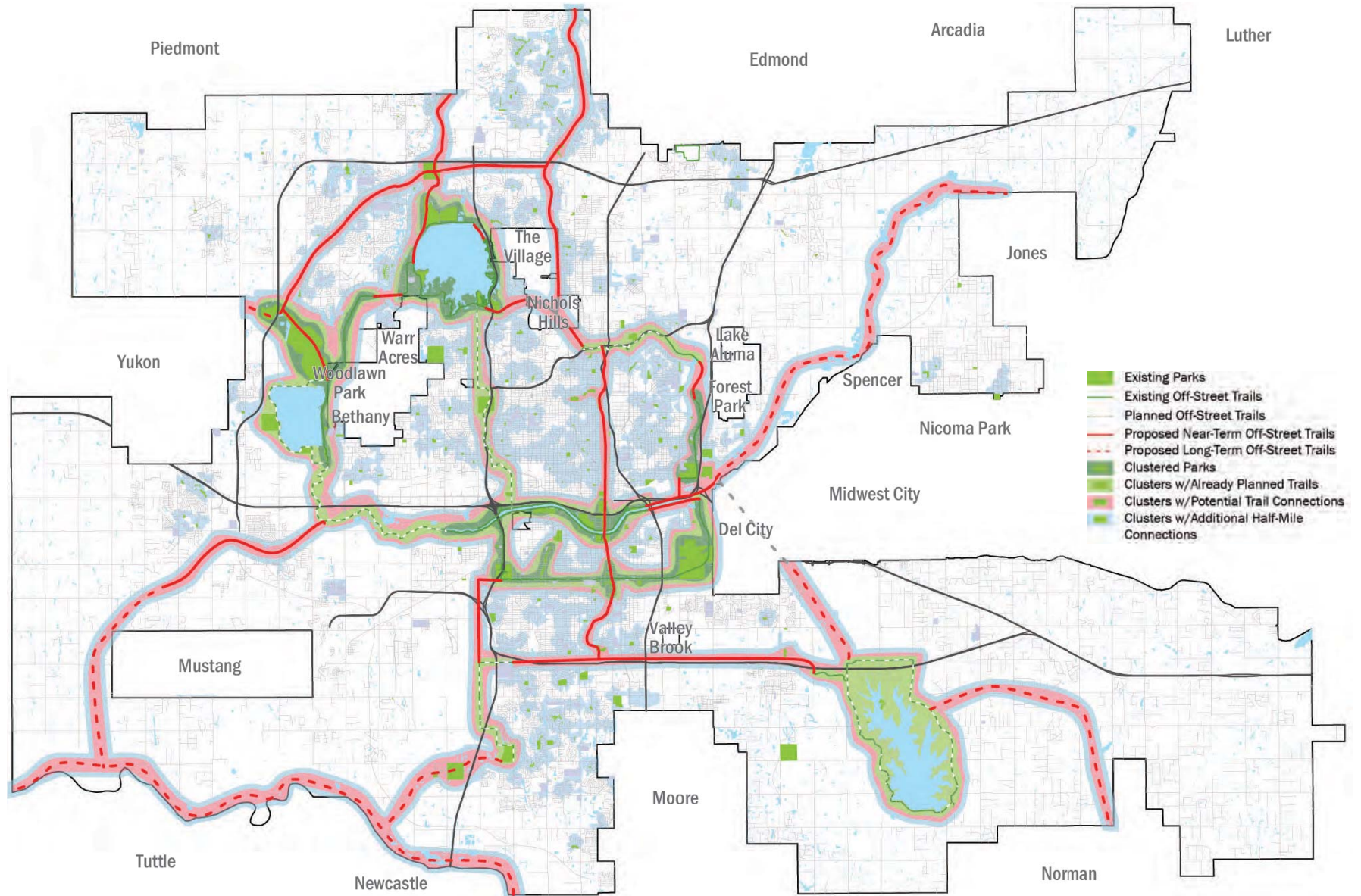
5. Lake Draper Trail and park
6. Airport Trail and adjacent Earlywine Park
7. Deep Fork Greenway and Katy Trail

Ideally, all of these large clusters should be connected to form a single, connected network. Adding in the potential near- and long-term trail connections would do just this, shown in pink.

Going a step farther, parks that are less than a half mile from each other were also mapped to show the clusters that could be

developed if new connections were added to the system, shown in blue. If certain park and recreation experiences are not available within a particular area, providing connections to existing programs and facilities that already have those experiences may be an alternative to creating new programs and facilities.

Proposed and Potential Trails Can Unite Existing Trails and Parks into One Connected System



## CONSIDERATIONS FOR EVALUATING IF A PARK MEETS COMMUNITY NEEDS

Communities are continuously changing, and with changing demographics and land use comes a need to periodically examine the effectiveness of parks in serving the community. The following considerations can be used to evaluate whether a park is meeting community needs and provide guidance about what can make a park better meet community needs. Conversely, if this evaluation finds a park does not meet any community needs, it may possibly be determined to be surplus. (The City may recommend disposal of property only after conducting a public hearing on the question.)

### General Considerations

- The park provides a type of open space or parkland that is not currently available in its neighborhood.
- The park meets park design standards.
- The park is on site with or adjacent to another public facility.
- The park is sized appropriately for necessary facilities and programs.
- The park is best administered by the Parks and Recreation Department.
- The park has proper access for maintenance or security.

### Recreational Facilities and Programs

- The park serves multiple age segments.
- The park provides a city-wide or local priority facility (Chapter 2) not available nearby.
- The park provides a city-wide or local priority program (Chapter 2) not available nearby.

### Connectivity and Access

- The park is in or connects to a residential area.
- The park is in an area that would not meet level of service standards without it.
- The park provides connections to other destinations (e.g., job or retail centers).

- The park is within a half mile of a neighborhood anchor (e.g., school, library, transit stop, community center, or multi-generational center).
- The park provides connections to other public open space or natural resources.
- The park connects developed areas to park and recreation space.
- The park includes a segment of planned trail or connects park clusters.
- The park is accessible by at least two of the following:
  - car
  - bicycle
  - public transportation
  - walking

### Economic Sustainability

- The park increases property values.
- The park is or can become a signature park.
- The park adds to sales tax revenue.
- The park has a part of its capital, maintenance, and/or operating costs offset by contributions from foundations, conservancies, or partnerships.
- The park has a feasibility study or business plan that projects operating costs will be recouped through user fees.
- The park has a set of performance measures that define its success.

### Health and Wellness

- The park improves air quality.
- The park reduces heat island effects.
- The park provides opportunities for active recreation.
- The park offers facilities for fitness or recreational sports.
- The park offers healthy snack or food options.
- The park grows healthy foods.



### Natural or Historic Value

- The park protects the diversity of landscapes or species in the city.
- The park is associated with architecture, events, or persons that have contributed to the history of Oklahoma or Oklahoma City.
- The park is unique in Oklahoma or Oklahoma City.
- The park creates buffers around the resources (e.g., riparian buffers).
- The park contributes to watershed health.
- The park has scenic value.
- The park offers a resource that is unique in the city.
- The park includes interpretation of natural or historic features.
- The park preserves the integrity of the historic resource's setting.

#### Giving a park a unique identity.

Stars and Stripes Park on Lake Hefner carries a patriotic theme from its name through its design.





## 7. ACTION PLAN

The following Action Plan provides a framework to guide decision-making and allocate resources to achieve the six strategic directions of the 2013 *Parks Master Plan*. It should be incorporated into annual work plans and budgeting systems and monitored on a continuous, as-needed basis. This continuous review supports planning as an ongoing process.

The Action Plan includes recommendations for how the City of Oklahoma City and community partners can implement each of the six Strategic directions outlined in Chapter 3. For each of the strategic directions, there is a set of actions that can move the park system in that direction, a rationale for each action, and specific action steps that the City and its partners can take to implement the actions.

The Action Table, located in Appendix C of this document, provides a summary of the strategic directions, actions, and action steps. For each action, the Action Table also:

- assigns a responsible party for implementation and monitoring/evaluation
- lists potential partners outside of the Parks and Recreation Department, including public, private, and non-profit entities that could assist in implementation

- provides performance measures that can be used to gauge success in implementation
- indicates a suggested time frame for implementation

It should be noted that the Action Table is not intended to be definitive, but rather to provide a working framework for discussion and further development by the City of Oklahoma City and its partners. The City is already moving forward with some of the recommendations. Others will be phased in over time or require further evaluation before being implemented. The intent is for the Action Plan to be a working tool to carry out the vision, mission, and strategic directions.

**Floating fun.**

Aquatic adventurers twist and swirl in a giant circular bowl before dropping some twenty feet to a pool below.



## STRATEGIC DIRECTION

### 1. MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE PHYSICAL ASSETS OF EXISTING PARKS.

- 1.1. Develop and implement a comprehensive asset management and maintenance system with sufficient funding to improve the quality of user experiences in Oklahoma City parks.

*About 76% of survey respondents rated the quality of parks in Oklahoma City as excellent or good. The national average is 85%.*

*The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) identifies maintenance standards on a six-level scale. Mode II is the level of maintenance expected on a recurring basis, while Mode I is the highest level maintenance reserved for high-visibility areas and Mode III often results from staffing or funding limitations. Current maintenance in Oklahoma City generally corresponds to NRPA Mode II or III, with sports fields achieving Mode II maintenance and neighborhood parks, community parks, and regional parks achieving Mode III maintenance.*

- 1.1.1. Maintain an inventory of all park assets (facilities, infrastructure, and grounds), including condition, deferred maintenance needs, and life cycle replacement schedules.
- 1.1.2. Establish maintenance standards for park assets (facilities, infrastructure, and grounds) tied to quality outcomes. Target a minimum of Mode II maintenance using NRPA's standards.
- 1.1.3. Prioritize and implement physical investments in existing park assets to implement the standards and address deferred maintenance and life cycle replacement.
- 1.1.4. Update existing facility and grounds maintenance procedures to support the system.
- 1.1.5. Increase current funding to sufficient levels to implement the system.

- 1.2. Determine additional areas in the system where mowing can be substantially reduced or eliminated to reduce cost and create a more balanced system of natural and maintained areas.

*While the Parks and Recreation Department has already identified areas that can remain in a natural state, public expectations and climatic conditions contribute to more mowing than may be necessary.*

- 1.2.1. Establish criteria to identify natural areas (e.g., public visibility, ecological restoration value, etc.).
- 1.2.2. Amend the weed ordinance to allow natural areas to be maintained in Oklahoma City parks.
- 1.2.3. Incorporate natural area management zones and practices into the maintenance plans for each park.
- 1.2.4. Undertake public outreach/education on the value of natural areas in city parks.

- 1.3. Develop and implement design standards to improve the attractiveness of and enhance user experiences in community-serving parks.

*To clarify expectations, streamline the design process, and promote equity of service delivery, the Parks and Recreation Department should codify its current guidelines for the design of neighborhood and other parks into a formal set of design standards for each type of park in the system. The guidelines and approval process for projects in parks should be simpler and more accessible to citizens and neighborhoods to spur additional community involvement.*

- 1.3.1. Structure the design standards to address the desired facilities and amenities for each park type (see Chapter 4), with the overall goal of providing a range of quality experiences to draw different age groups to use the park.

1.3.2. Address the following in the design standards: facility design (e.g., materials); access, circulation, and parking to support different levels of facilities and amenities; landscaping, including tree planting and maintenance per Action 1.4; and signage, safety and security, lighting, costs, environmental sustainability, etc.

1.3.3. Apply the design standards to all physical improvement projects in the parks.

#### 1.4. Implement a tree planting and replacement program in the Oklahoma City parks.

*Thirty percent of survey respondents indicated that the City should emphasize making improvements to existing parks, including planting trees. The City of Oklahoma City and the Parks and Recreation Department do not currently have a tree canopy standard. However, parks are natural places to plant trees, increase the city's tree canopy, and maximize the benefits that trees provide.*

1.4.1. Develop a GIS inventory of existing trees in the parks (species, size, condition, canopy coverage).

1.4.2. Establish a tree canopy coverage target, preferred species, and criteria for priority tree planting locations (e.g., in picnic areas and along walking trails).

1.4.3. Allocate funding in the annual parks budget for tree planting and replacement. Include adequate funding for maintenance.

1.4.4. Support greenokc's direction to establish an Urban Forestry Program and City Urban Forester position.

1.4.5. Coordinate tree planting with city-wide efforts (e.g., the releafokc program).

#### 1.5. Identify and dispose of unproductive parks to allow resources to be invested in more productive parks that better serve community needs.

*The Parks and Recreation Department currently has a system of identifying and disposing of surplus parks. At least 3 parks were identified as surplus since the 2005 Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan. However, the Department often finds that parks identified as surplus are difficult to dispose of.*

1.5.1. Use the criteria defined in Chapter 6 to identify and dispose of surplus parks.

1.5.2. Improve processes for disposal of parkland identified as surplus.

#### 1.6. Evaluate the current park maintenance districts for opportunities to increase efficiency and reduce costs.

*To increase the level of maintenance and improve the appearance of parks across the system, the Parks and Recreation Department can aim to increase efficiency and reduce maintenance costs. One way to achieve this is to optimize maintenance operations, specifically the locations of maintenance districts and the amount of time maintenance staff spends driving.*

1.6.1. Undertake a drive time analysis to determine the time maintenance staff spends driving during a typical day.

1.6.2. Redesign the existing (five) park maintenance districts to limit the amount of drive time (ideally to no more than an hour and a half daily) to increase productivity and reduce the cost of maintenance and associated expenses such as fuel. Conduct a cost-benefit analysis to compare gains to costs such as increased supervision, new maintenance facility requirements, etc. prior to finalizing a recommendation for revised or new districts.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION

### 2. DEVELOP FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS IN EXISTING PARKS TO MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS.

#### 2.1. Implement a program to improve existing park assets to align with community recreational facility needs.

*Park facilities should meet the needs of the people who live in the neighborhoods they serve. The community survey indicated that 19% of respondents did not use parks and recreation facilities more often because a desired facility or program was not available. The survey also identified priority facility needs, summarized in Chapter 2. Used in combination with the list of amenities in the park classifications in Chapter 4, this can provide a guide to determine whether community needs are being met and what facilities should be added to existing parks.*

- 2.1.1. Evaluate each park for its contribution to community needs using the park classification and evaluation considerations contained in Chapter 6.
- 2.1.2. Using the evaluation conducted per 2.1.1, prioritize deficient parks for improvements (upgrades to existing facilities, development of new ones, etc.) to meet community needs.
- 2.1.3. Develop and regularly update park master plans to define the improvements to be made to priority parks. Engage surrounding residents in the planning process to address the local neighborhood context, demographics, needs, and priorities. Remove or replace unproductive facilities or amenities.
- 2.1.4. Establish long-range maintenance plans for park improvements consistent with the asset management and maintenance system (Action 1.1). Allocate funding to support improvements and long-term maintenance.

#### 2.2. Develop a plan for recreational programs and services to be offered in Oklahoma City parks to meet community needs.

*In addition to aligning park assets with community needs, park programming should be aligned with community needs. Ninety-four percent of survey respondents indicated they are very or somewhat important to overall quality of life. As with facilities, the survey also identified priority program needs, summarized in Chapter 2. In addition, 85% of respondents indicated that parks, facilities, and programs are very or somewhat important to the pursuit of a healthy and active lifestyle, indicating great potential for health and wellness programming.*

- 2.2.1. Identify core programs and services that should be offered by the Parks and Recreation Department, focusing on health and wellness as the key element. Identify non-core programs that can be offered by other providers.
- 2.2.2. Evaluate, strengthen, and expand existing offerings by the Parks and Recreation Department consistent with the definition of core programs and services. Incorporate facilities to support these programs and services into park improvement plans.
- 2.2.3. Establish partnership agreements that maximize the extent to which recreational programs and services offered by other providers in Oklahoma City parks meet needs of the overall community (as opposed to specific interest groups).
- 2.2.4. Explore joint programming opportunities with school districts within Oklahoma City.

**2.3. Implement a model of larger, multi-generational centers located in regional (district or metropolitan) parks to replace the current outdated model of smaller recreation centers in community parks.**

*The current model of many, small dispersed recreation centers is difficult maintain and replicate given current funding. Nationally, recreation centers are being replaced by fewer, larger multi-generational centers that are more cost effective, can offer a larger variety of programs, and cater to much larger segments of the community.*

2.3.1. Identify the programs and uses to be accommodated in multi-generational centers based on the needs analysis. Such centers should incorporate the components of aquatic centers, senior wellness centers, and community/health and fitness centers into one facility.

2.3.2. Identify locations for multi-generational centers based on the level of service standards. Where feasible, expand/upgrade existing facilities (e.g., regional aquatic centers). Develop plans, allocate funding, and incorporate the identified centers into the city's Capital Improvements Program. Dedicate funding to support long-term maintenance.

**2.4. Enhance the value of the Oklahoma City parks as places for the community to come together at scales ranging from neighborhood gatherings to large-scale festivals and special events.**

*In addition to supporting the highest quality of life for Oklahoma City residents, the mission of the park system includes stimulating the economic viability of the city. Neighborhood gatherings and special events result in increased awareness of the park system and increased spending around the venue, and parks are natural event venues. Large-scale festivals and special events provide an opportunity to draw visitors from outside the city, allowing the city to capture additional spending.*

2.4.1. Designate areas for informal gatherings in local (neighborhood and community) parks.

2.4.2. Incorporate larger special event areas with sufficient support facilities (access, parking, etc.) into regional (district and metropolitan) parks.

2.4.3. Evaluate the effectiveness of existing special events offered in Oklahoma City parks. Identify five or more existing or new signature events that can be leveraged for regional economic impact and bring recognition to the park system (see Action 5.2).

**2.5. Increase the attractiveness of Oklahoma City parks for young adult professionals as an economic development and community-building strategy.**

*Companies looking to hire young professionals consider a good park system among the amenities they know will attract such talent. Young professionals are looking for high quality of life, including recreational opportunities, urban life, and amenities such as parks. These are reasons cited, for example, in Boeing's decision to relocate its corporate headquarters to Chicago in 2001.*

2.5.1. Conduct surveys and focus groups to determine the recreational opportunities young professionals seek in a park system, with the goal of increasing the city's competitiveness with other regions in attracting and retaining talented young workers and the businesses that depend upon them.

2.5.2. Based on the survey and focus group results, incorporate selected facilities and programs appealing to young adult professionals into regional or community parks.

2.5.3. Work with the Chamber of Commerce to market the economic value of parks as a way to attract talented young workers and businesses to the city (Action 4.2).



## STRATEGIC DIRECTION

### 3. IMPROVE ACCESS TO EXISTING PARKS.

#### 3.1. Implement a program to better connect neighborhoods to existing parks via the sidewalk network.

*More than half of survey respondents indicated there are insufficient parks and green space areas within walking distance of their residence. The analysis in Chapter 6 showed that nearly 40% the people who could be within walking distance of a park are not because of a lack of sidewalks.*

- 3.1.1. Use the park access maps in Chapter 6 to identify sidewalk gaps, deficient conditions, and other access barriers within a ½- to 1-mile “walkshed” of each existing park. Prioritize existing and potential street/sidewalk connections for improvement.
- 3.1.2. Evaluate current park access points as they relate to the existing and potential street/sidewalk connections. Prioritize improvements to existing and development of new access points to create welcoming park entrances (signage, landscaping, etc.). Develop design standards for these entrances (Action 1.3).
- 3.1.3. Prioritize street tree planting along streets leading to parks.
- 3.1.4. Allocate funding for priority park access (sidewalk and entrance) improvements, targeting retrofits in the central city and urban area to improve community health and promote economic revitalization.

#### 3.2. Connect parks to the citywide trail system.

*Another way to improve access to existing parks—particularly regional parks—is to better connect them to the citywide trail system. Since trails are the highest priority facility identified by survey respondents, there is clearly a desire for a more comprehensive trail network. Trails also attract people from longer distances, so connecting parks to trails increases the number of potential park users.*

- 3.2.1. Prioritize segments of the City’s trails master plan (Action 5.1) connecting to existing parks for implementation, including “street-trails” to create connections to larger parks.

#### 3.3. Enhance City design standards to promote connectivity.

*For a period in Oklahoma City, sidewalks were not part of street design standards and were not required to be built as part of new road construction or road improvement projects. This explains why some neighborhoods have no sidewalks and why more residents do not have sufficient parks and green space areas within walking distance. This plan supports planokc’s recommendations to include better pedestrian and bicycle requirements in the City’s street design standards.*

- 3.3.1. Implement the pedestrian and bicycle requirements of planokc’s proposed street design standards to improve the pedestrian and bicycle environment, including sidewalks, multi-use paths, and bicycle lanes. Add requirements for street trees along both sides of all new or reconstructed streets.
- 3.3.2. Adopt a new “street-trail” classification (separated paths wide enough to accommodate both pedestrians and bicycles along boulevards and other streets designated in the City’s trails master plan).

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION

### 4. PROMOTE AND INCREASE AWARENESS OF THE VALUE OF PARKS.

#### 4.1. Increase the marketing and business development capabilities of the Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Department.

*The community survey showed the most common way residents hear about parks, programs, and activities is by word of mouth—from friends and neighbors. It also showed that 37% of households do not use parks and recreation facilities and programs more often because they do not know where to go or what is offered, significantly higher than the national average of 22%. This indicates a lack of effective marketing of the park system. Currently, the Parks and Recreation Department has only a single person dedicated to marketing, and there is no comprehensive marketing plan for the park system. Additionally, business development capabilities could help the Department become more financially self-sufficient and achieve a higher level of cost recovery.*

- 4.1.1. Develop a distinctive “brand” for Oklahoma City parks within the overall city brand.
- 4.1.2. Increase the marketing resources of the Parks and Recreation Department, and implement a plan to strengthen communication and outreach efforts on the value of parks (website, social media, etc.) using the brand.
- 4.1.3. Ensure that partners who are operating programs and facilities in Oklahoma City parks provide recognition for the park system (partnership agreements, signage, brochures, etc.).
- 4.1.4. Establish a business development office to develop earned income opportunities and other diversified revenue options available to help offset operational and capital costs and to oversee development of business plans for major facilities and events.

#### 4.2. Initiate a broader, community-wide campaign to increase awareness of the value parks bring to Oklahoma City’s quality of life and economy.

*Survey respondents overwhelmingly indicated that they believe quality parks, facilities, and programs are very or somewhat important to the pursuit of a healthy and active lifestyle (85%) and to the overall quality of life in Oklahoma City (94%). Yet, Oklahoma City continues to compare poorly as a city in terms of health and fitness. It ranked last in the American College of Sports Medicine’s American Fitness Index of the 50 largest metropolitan areas in the country. In addition, parks bring economic value by way of increasing surrounding property values, attracting a skilled workforce, and direct visitor spending. How parks can affect individuals’ health and how parks benefit the economy should be part of a larger campaign to increase awareness of the value parks bring to Oklahoma City’s quality of life and economy.*

- 4.2.1. Conduct a study of the economic impact of Oklahoma City parks.
- 4.2.2. Establish a “Parks Alliance” based on the Neighborhood Alliance model, with funding to focus on marketing the value of parks citywide as a key priority (see Chapter 10).
- 4.2.3. Develop and implement a coordinated marketing campaign to promote the value of Oklahoma City parks. Engage other partners (Chamber of Commerce, City-County Health Department, healthcare institutions, Oklahoma City Schools, Neighborhood Alliance, etc.) and media outlets in this effort.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION

### 5. DEVELOP NEW PARKS AND FACILITIES.

#### 5.1. Complete the citywide trails system.

*Nearly twice as many survey respondents (38%) selected walking and biking trails as a top priority facility as the next highest choice. There is clearly a desire for a more comprehensive trail network. Since the previous trail master plan was developed, some trail segments have become unfeasible. To achieve a citywide, connected system, new connections will be necessary.*

- 5.1.1. Using the trail access and connectivity maps in Chapter 6 as a guide, update the trails master plan and prioritize key segments for implementation.
- 5.1.2. Identify “street-trail” connections along key streets and boulevards to increase connectivity and fill gaps in the system.
- 5.1.3. Require new developments to reserve trail segments designated on the trails master plan.
- 5.1.4. Incorporate “healthy heart trail” or similar health and wellness features into the trails system (signage, distance markers, etc.).
- 5.1.5. Develop greenway corridors around trails, where rights-of-way allow, with trees, benches, possible concessions, and other amenities.

#### 5.2. Develop a signature downtown (Core to Shore) park system to leverage economic development and quality of life.

*The Core to Shore plan envisions a series of neighborhoods, parks, and economic development opportunities that will reinvigorate the area between downtown Oklahoma City and the Oklahoma River, bring new jobs, and result in a*

*higher quality of life for residents. A 40-acre Central Park promises to be a centerpiece for the development of new offices, retail, and mixed use housing in the area.*

- 5.2.1. Implement the Core to Shore Plan connecting the downtown core to the Oklahoma River, beginning with Central Park. Identify a sustainable funding stream to support park operations and the highest standards of maintenance (Mode I per NRPA’s maintenance standards).
- 5.2.2. Incorporate regionally significant, large-scale events into downtown park programming (see Action 2.4).
- 5.2.3. Incorporate recreational facilities and amenities for downtown residents.

#### 5.3. Develop new local (neighborhood or community) parks where necessary to serve existing residents and regional (district or metropolitan) parks where necessary to serve residents of developing parts of the city (urban or urban growth area).

*While the City of Oklahoma City should continue to serve residents with the existing system of local and regional parks in developed parts of the city, the City should focus its attention on filling gaps in service for existing residents and providing regional parks in developing parts of the city. Local park needs for developing areas should be met through school parks and development regulations that require privately-built parks to serve new neighborhoods.*

- 5.3.1. Conduct site selection analyses in areas where the level of service standards indicate future local and regional parks will be needed. Incorporate land acquisition and park development into long-term capital improvement plans.
- 5.3.2. Allocate funding to support development of the new parks when needed to serve residents of developing areas. Consider enactment of a park impact fee proportional to the demand for regional recreation generated by new developments.

#### 5.4. Develop partnerships to develop and manage new facilities.

*The Parks and Recreation Department has some very successful partnership agreements that enable partners to take care of specific parks or operate programs within parks. This helps the City offer programs and services that may not be feasible to provide given current funding. This type of partnership approach could be expanded to develop new facilities. However, the City should make sure its partners provide recognition for its role in partnerships,*

*reversing a common misperception that the parks partners operate in are not publicly accessible or owned.*

- 5.4.1. Engage potential partners (e.g., health care providers, YMCA, corporate sponsors) in developing concepts for significant new facilities (e.g., multi-generational centers/senior wellness centers) based on needs assessments.
- 5.4.2. Develop agreements on programs and processes for operating and managing facilities that give proper recognition to Oklahoma City parks.

#### **Bringing together a variety of trees.**

The Margaret Annis Boys Arboretum at Will Rogers Gardens contains trees that grow throughout Oklahoma. The Margaret Annis Boys Trust funded renovation of the arboretum.



## STRATEGIC DIRECTION

### 6. ESTABLISH AGREEMENTS AND STANDARDS FOR PRIVATE PARKS AND SCHOOL PARKS.

#### 6.1. Develop a coordinated school/park system strategy providing for appropriate use and sharing of facilities for recreational purposes.

*School parks—recreation areas on school property—offer a tremendous opportunity to expand park and recreation access in Oklahoma City. Outside of school hours, these facilities can supplement local park service in developed areas where there are gaps in service and be thought of as integral to providing local park service in developing areas. Standard agreements would help streamline the process of working with the many school districts in Oklahoma City to ensure public access to school properties. Design of these spaces to ensure safety outside of school hours should be considered along with school requirements.*

- 6.1.1. Establish standards and agreements for use of school grounds as school parks, prioritizing areas not meeting the level of service standard for access to public parks. Address safety and liability issues.
- 6.1.2. Develop standards and agreements for joint development of recreational facilities in the construction of new schools or significant upgrades to existing ones.
- 6.1.3. Begin discussions on the above with the Oklahoma City School District. Extend to school districts located elsewhere in the urban area and the urban growth area over time.

#### 6.2. Meet the local recreational needs of new residents in developing areas through private parks.

*Oklahoma City's subdivision regulations include provisions requiring open space for gated subdivisions. However, this should be expanded to include all new subdivisions.*

*Adequate public facilities requirements should include parks, as new development causes an increase in demand for and usage of parks. It should be the developer's responsibility to ensure there are adequate local parks to serve new development and that those parks meet the City's standards.*

- 6.2.1. Establish design standards for private parks in new developments (size, walking distance for residents, minimum uses to be provided, long-term maintenance, etc.).
- 6.2.2. Incorporate the design standards into a parkland dedication ordinance or other regulations to ensure that the private parks serve the recreational needs of residents.



## 8. FUNDING OPTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Based on benchmarking conducted for the 2013 *Parks Master Plan*, Oklahoma City is below the mean compared to peer cities on per capita spending for maintenance, operations, full-time employees, and spending per full-time employee (see Chapter 2). Like City of Oklahoma City government as a whole, the Parks and Recreation Department is impacted by the fact that Oklahoma is the only state in which municipalities do not have access to property taxes for operating expenditures, creating a strong reliance on sales taxes (which are cyclical in nature because of their tie to the economy). This fiscal reality highlights the need for diversified funding sources if the Department is to meet its mission of providing high-quality parks, recreational, and cultural services to Oklahoma City residents and visitors—particularly as the city continues to grow and expand outward from the core.

## OKLAHOMA CITY BY THE NUMBERS

The Master Plan consultant team assessed financial information provided by the Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Department for Fiscal Years (FY) 2007–2008 through 2011–2012 (see Appendix B for the complete financial overview). The following findings are based on this assessment. Unless otherwise noted, citizen satisfaction figures are based on surveys conducted to measure Parks and Recreation Department performance on indicators included in the City of Oklahoma City Strategic Business Plan.

- The overall budget for the Department in 2012 was \$23,888,141. This equates to per capita spending of \$40.35, which is very low for Midwestern cities of similar size to Oklahoma City. Typical levels of per capita spending in the Midwest are \$65–70 dollars.
- The Department has a budget cost recovery level of 46% from earned income revenues, including golf operations. This figure is higher than most Midwestern cities, which typically recover 35–40% of their budget from earned income.
- The 2012 operating capital budget for the Parks and Recreation Department was \$189,407. Including bond funding, the capital budget for 2012 was \$36,797,875. Oklahoma City does not have a permanent, dedicated funding source for capital improvements. Best practice cities typically spend 3–4% annually of their total asset value (less land value) on capital investment in facilities and infrastructure. The total asset value of facilities and infrastructure in the Oklahoma City park system was not available for the financial assessment.
- The performance measures indicate that the Department spends an average \$1,421 per acre on maintenance (4,590 acres maintained), a very low level compared to other Midwest cities. In the 2012 City of Oklahoma City DirectionFinder® Survey, citizens indicated that they have a 63% total satisfaction level (very satisfied and satisfied) with maintenance of city parks. The citizen's survey developed as part of this Master Plan process revealed a 76% satisfaction level (very satisfied or satisfied) with the maintenance of city parks. Trails had a 52% level of satisfaction based on the City's performance indicators.
- The Department spends \$1.91 per square foot to maintain 226,784 square feet of flower beds. Typical costs for this task are in the range of \$3.50–4.00 per square foot.
- The City spends \$8.42 per capita on providing recreational opportunities—such as aquatics, athletics, and fishing—to citizens and visitors, which is well below the norm. Other Midwestern cities typically spend around \$20 dollars per capita. User satisfaction from the City's performance indicators shows that 44% of the users are very satisfied or satisfied with recreation facilities. Participants expressed a good level of satisfaction with recreation programs (92% according to the performance indicators), while the citizen survey conducted for this Master Plan showed that users had a 71% level of satisfaction (very satisfied or satisfied). Based on the performance indicators, aquatic programs had a 46% level of user satisfaction (very satisfied or satisfied) while sports programs had a 47% of level of satisfaction. The Department spends \$52.18 per person who participates in organized sport programs, a relatively high number.

## FUNDING SOURCES

Park and recreation agencies across the United States have developed an understanding of how to manage revenue options to support facilities and services in response to the limited availability of tax dollars. Financially sustainable systems no longer rely on taxes as their sole revenue source but have developed new options to help support capital and operational needs.

A growing number of jurisdictions have developed policies on pricing of services, cost recovery rates, and partnership agreements for programs and facilities provided to the community. They have also developed strong partnerships that are fair and equitable in the delivery of services based on whom receives the service, for what purpose, for what benefit, and at what costs. In addition, agencies have learned to use parks and recreation facilities, amenities, programs, and events to create economic development. This development helps keep property values high around parks and along trails through increased maintenance.



Agencies have recognized that people will visit their community for recreation facilities such as sports complexes, pools, special events, and major attractions if the management and presentation results in a high quality experience. In addition, adding sports facilities and events attracts tournaments that create hotel stays and increased expenditures in restaurants and retail areas in the region.

The Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Department has many successful policies and management practices in place. The Department is presently 46% self-supporting, which is good for an urban park system. As noted, however, overall per capita spending is low compared to other park systems, and new and expanded funding sources are needed to sustain the system for the future. A range of funding options is outlined below for consideration in supporting the capital and operational needs of the Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Department.

## Funding Sources for Land Acquisition and Capital Development

### Land Dedication and/or Park Impact Fee

Many cities, including Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio, San Jose, Chicago, Atlanta, Portland (Oregon), Long Beach (California), and (most recently) Houston, have ordinances requiring housing developers to donate land for parks to serve the new residents and to make up for the loss of open space. In most of those communities, developers who do not wish to donate land have the option of paying into a parkland acquisition fund.

Based on discussions with Parks and Recreation Department staff, Oklahoma City has relied on sales tax revenues and an occasional bond issue to acquire parkland. Given the level of investment in new development in the city, enactment of a land dedication and/or park impact fee ordinance would provide a significant new revenue source for future parkland acquisition and development of the land for recreational purposes.

### Open Space Bond Issue

Many cities across the United States have used open space bond issues to acquire land for parks, park development and open space. The bonds are paid off by either property or sales taxes and are

usually ten years in length. Communities such as Seattle, Phoenix, Chicago Park Districts, Kansas City, and Denver have motivated voters to support open space through bond issues.

### Bond Issue for Park Development and Improvements

This is the source that most park and recreation agencies use to motivate voters to support infrastructure improvements and new construction projects. Over the last 10 years, the City of Dallas has been using property-tax-related bond issues to fund over \$700 million in park-related improvements, which is significantly benefitting the livability of neighborhoods, the downtown, and regional parks.

### Facility Authorities

A facility authority can be set up to fund development of a specific park or attraction such as a stadium, large recreation center, aquatic center, or sports venue for competitive events. Bond funding usually comes from sales taxes. The City of Indianapolis has created several community recreation facilities and national competition venues for local and economic purposes. The Facility Authority is responsible for managing the sites and operating them in a self-supporting manner.

### Real-Estate Transfer Fees

This is a relatively new form of funding that many agencies and jurisdictions have used to acquire parkland and develop the lands they acquire. The money comes from the transfer of real estate from seller to buyer, with the jurisdiction retaining ½% of the value of the property at the time of sale to be dedicated to acquiring parkland.

### Benefit Districts

This funding source identifies the benefits associated with an improvement as the basis for establishing a tax on surrounding properties or a sales tax to support the capital cost associated with land acquisition and development. This mechanism can be applied to large community parks, regional parks, event plazas, signature parks, and attractions. The benefit districts are usually in downtowns or areas of the city slated for redevelopment. This has been used in Oklahoma City in the Downtown District.

### Lease Backs

This is another source of capital funding whereby banks or private placement fund companies will develop a park or recreation attraction, recreation center, pool, sports complex, etc. with the intent of buying the land, developing the project, and leasing it back to the city to pay off the capital costs over a 20 to 30 year period. Major banks are using this mechanism to invest billions of dollars in public infrastructure across the United States.

### Transient Occupancy Tax

This funding source is used by many cities to fund improvements in parks in urban areas to improve the image of an area, enhance parks where hotels and businesses are located, and to support the development of park-related improvements. Cities will apply a 5–10% tax on the value of a hotel room, which is dedicated to improving facilities and to market the community.

### Special Recognition License Tag

Some cities have created a special designation car tag that provides income to the city or a parks foundation. In Indianapolis, the city has a designated tag for greenways. The license plate provides \$45 per tag to the Greenways Foundation for greenway development and management.

### Conservation Districts

Conservation Districts operate similarly to a land trust (see below under Funding Sources for Park Maintenance) but are set up to protect and preserve property for park systems. Usually these conservation districts are managed by a conservation board for the protection of watersheds or sensitive natural areas. The conservation district's role is to provide landowners with tax benefits for allowing their property to be put into the district for protection purposes.

### Park Foundation

Park foundations have helped many cities acquire land and develop parks across the nation. These foundations are established for the purpose of supporting parks and recreation needs in the city. The Houston Parks Foundation typically raises \$5 million a year for land

acquisition and park improvements. The City of Indianapolis has a well-managed park foundation that raises capital dollars for needed projects in the city.

### Grants

Grants have always been a good source of funding for parks throughout the United States. Grants can come from the federal government (see below under Federal Funding Sources), state grant sources such as casino revenues or taxes on alcohol, and local grants from community foundations. Indianapolis has received over \$100 million in foundation grants over the last 15 years from the Lilly Endowment for park related improvements in the city.

### Income Tax

In Ohio, many cities have passed a 1% income tax to support parks and recreation needs. This is voted on by the community, and outside residents who work in the city help to pay for park and recreational improvements.

## Funding Sources for Park Maintenance

Oklahoma City's park system would benefit greatly from dedicated funding for parks maintenance. The following are some funding sources that are particularly suitable for this purpose. They can also provide funding for park and recreational facility development.

### Maintenance Endowment Fund

This fund is dedicated exclusively for maintenance of a major park or recreational attraction, funded by a percentage of user fees from programs, events, and rentals.

### Boulevard Tax

This funding source is used by the City of Kansas City to develop and maintain parkways and boulevards throughout the city. Residents who live along these corridors are taxed per linear foot, which is added to their property tax bill. It has proven to be very beneficial to home owners who live along these corridors when selling their homes, which are highly valued properties within the city. This same funding source could be developed for Oklahoma City for the historic boulevard system.

### **Landscape and Lighting Districts**

This funding source is commonly used in California, where neighborhood residents are assessed taxes to support development and ongoing maintenance of parks, landscaped roadways, and boulevards. These improvements raise the value of homes and the quality of the neighborhood.

### **Stormwater Utility**

This funding source is used in many cities as a way to develop and maintain greenways and green corridors through taxes included in residents' utility bills. Improvements can include trails, drainage areas, retention ponds used for recreation purposes, and natural protection of waterways through cities. The City of Houston is using this source to develop and maintain bayous throughout the city, including improved access and use for flood control and recreation purposes. This funding source would work well in Oklahoma City.

### **Land Trusts**

This funding source provides ongoing revenue for a specific property for development and maintenance costs. Land trusts operate with a separate non-profit board that oversees the maintenance and funding needs of the park. Santa Barbara Land Trust is a good example of a land trust that is managing a regional park for that city. Likewise the Piedmont Park Conservancy in Atlanta is a good example of a private land trust managing a signature park.

### **Greenway Foundations**

Many cities have turned to a foundation to help develop and maintain and greenway corridors and trails throughout the city. The City of Indianapolis Greenway Foundation develops and maintains 181 miles of greenways and negotiates land leases along the trails with food, bicycle, and other concessionaires as a funding source to maintain the trails.

### **Sale or Lease of Development Rights**

Some cities sell or lease the development rights along trail corridors to local utilities for water, sewer, fiber optic, and cable lines on a per-mile basis. This revenue can be used to help develop and manage

the corridors. King County in Seattle has done a very good job in accessing this funding source for greenway development.

### **Dedicated Sales Tax**

A dedicated sales tax has been used by many cities as a funding tool for capital improvements. A one-cent sales tax for parks and recreation in Douglas County, Kansas has generated over \$50 million in park improvements over the last seven years. The City of Phoenix also receives sales tax revenue from rental car taxes to support parks and recreation services. Oklahoma City has used this source to fund park-related improvements through MAPS.

### **Partnership Development Agreement**

Oklahoma City relies heavily on partners to provide recreational programs within city parks. Partnership development agreements call for partners to develop their respective facilities based on set design guidelines, with the City or a private management company managing all the site elements. Partners work collectively to promote the site as a whole versus individual amenities. In Oklahoma City, the Oklahoma City Community Foundation has an agreement to oversee maintenance and funding for Campbell Park.

### **Property Damage Payments**

The City of Oklahoma City collects property damage when vehicles hit street trees and or impact park property. These monies can be used to replace trees and improve parks.

## Funding Sources for Park, Recreation, and Sports Facility Operations

Park agencies have numerous revenue sources to draw from to support operational and management costs associated with recreational facilities, including long-term capital replacement costs. The following are funding options to consider:

### User fees

In many instances, user fees are charged to access a recreation facility or sports program. Fees can range from \$3–5 per participant to \$400 per team in a sports league.

### Concessions

Concessions can be leased to a private operator for a percentage of gross profits. Typically, 15–18% of gross profits can be recovered from a private concessionaire, or the Department could manage the concessions.

### Parking Fees

Parking fees (typically \$5) can be charged during tournaments or special events.

### Field Permits

Field permits can be issued for practice or games to cover operational and management costs. If a for-profit private operator desires to rent a site or facility for a sporting tournament, the City can charge a permit fee plus a percentage of gross receipts from the event. The City of Las Vegas uses this arrangement on a 22-field soccer complex.

### Admission Fee

An admission fee can be charged to an event in a park or sports or recreation complex. In many instances, both admission and parking fees are charged for major sports tournaments at sports complexes. High school sports tournaments typically include an admission fee.

### Tournament Fees

Fees for softball, baseball, soccer, etc. can be assessed for each team that enters a tournament. The fees can range from \$150–400 a team, varying based on the number of games guaranteed.

### Official Drink

Official drink and food sponsors can be utilized throughout the system or at specific parks or recreation facilities. Each official drink and food sponsor pays a set percentage of gross receipts (typically 5–10%) in exchange for being the official product and receiving exclusive pouring and food rights at the complex. Likewise official equipment sponsors work well for trucks, mowers, and tractors.

### Scoreboard Sponsors

Scoreboard sponsors pay for the cost of the scoreboards for the life of the board, which is usually 15 years.

### Official Product Sponsors

Official product sponsors for balls, shoes, hats, gloves, etc. can be used throughout the system. The sponsor prices can vary by how much exposure is received and the amount of sales created.

### Advertising Sales

Advertising at sports complexes, playgrounds, and dog parks; on scoreboards, gym floors, trash cans, and flower pots; in locker rooms, along trails, and as part of special events have long been an acceptable practice in parks and recreation systems and should be considered to support operational costs.

### Wi-Fi Revenue

The City can set up a Wi-Fi area where a Wi-Fi vendor sells the advertising on the Wi-Fi access banner to local businesses, targeting the users at a specific site or facility.

### Cell Tower Leases

Cell tower leases on top of sports lights can be used to generate revenue. This could provide \$35,000–50,000 annually for a site if cell tower coverage is needed in the area.

### Capital Improvement Fee

Attractions such as a sports complex would benefit from an ongoing maintenance endowment to keep facilities and amenities updated and positioned for the future. A capital improvement fee of \$2–3 on each person who participates in a class, event, or program can be incorporated into the cost of the program or event.

### Volunteerism

This is an indirect revenue source in that persons donate time to assist in providing a product or service at a park or recreational facility on an hourly basis. This reduces the City's cost in providing the service plus it builds advocacy for the park system.

### Special Fund-Raiser

Many agencies hold special fund-raisers on an annual basis to help cover specific programs and capital projects, with the monies raised dedicated for the park system.

### Private Management of Elements the Park System

The City should consider outsourcing elements of the park system to save operating money where appropriate.

### Recycling Center

A sports complex or recreation facility will create a large amount of recycling materials that can be used to generate funding.

### Friends of Sports

Recreation facilities and sports complexes lend themselves to friends groups established to support individual sports. These groups can assist with tournaments, fund-raising, training of coaches, and clean-up days at a complex or recreation facility.

### Getting involved to improve parks.

Volunteers breathe new life into the entrance of Douglass Recreation Center with new plantings.



### **Catering**

Many recreation facilities and sports complexes are well suited to have an on-site caterer that sports groups can utilize. Caterers usually pay a fixed rate on gross revenues, for example 12–15% of the cost of food and 18% of beverages.

### **Membership Fees for Recreation Facilities and Aquatic Center**

Oklahoma City has created some membership and admission fees to aquatic centers. This revenue source could also be applied to recreation centers and special use facilities.

### **Corporate Naming Rights**

In this arrangement, corporations invest in the right to name an event, facility, or product within a park in exchange for an annual fee, typically over a 10-year period. The cost of the naming right is based on the impression points the facility or event will receive from the newspapers, TV, websites, and visitors to or users of the park. Naming rights for park and recreation facilities are typically attached to sports complexes, amphitheaters, recreation centers, aquatic facilities, stadiums, and events and are a good source of outside revenue.

### **Corporate Sponsorships**

Corporations can underwrite a portion or all of the cost of an event, program, or activity based on their name being associated with the service. Types of sponsorships include title sponsors, presenting sponsors, associate sponsors, product sponsors, or in-kind sponsors. Many agencies seek corporate support for these types of activities.

### **Special Event Fees and Sponsorships**

An admission fee can be included in the cost of a special event or concert hosted within a city park. Sponsor fees can cover the cost of stages, security, and entertainment. Ticket sales combined with sponsorships can provide a good source of revenue.

### **Maintenance Endowment Fund**

See above under Funding Sources for Park Maintenance.

### **Park Revolving Fund**

This is a dedicated fund used only for park purposes that is replenished on an ongoing basis from various funding sources such as grants, sponsorships, advertising, program user fees, and rental fees within the park. The Department could establish a revolving fund supported by one or more funding sources identified in this section. This would work well for golf courses, aquatic centers, and sports complexes.

### **Permit Fees**

This fee can be charged for exclusive reservation of picnic shelters, sports fields, special events, and competition tournaments held in the city by other organizations. Permit fees include a base fee for all direct and indirect costs incurred by the city plus a percentage of the gross for major special events and tournaments held on publicly owned properties. The receipts could be applied to the Park Revolving Fund to help support park operation and improvements.

### **Conservancy or Friends Organization**

This type of nonprofit is devoted to supporting a specific park (see above under Funding Sources for Park Maintenance).

### **Adopt-an-Area of a Park**

In this approach, local neighborhood groups or businesses make a volunteer commitment to maintaining a specific area of a park. The city currently has 72 adopt-an-area commitments.

### **Adopt-a-Trail Programs**

These are typically small grant programs that fund new construction, repair/renovation, maps, trail brochures, facilities (bike racks, picnic areas, birding equipment), as well as providing maintenance support. Such programs are similar to adopt-a-mile of highway programs. Adopt-a-trail programs can also be in the form of cash contributions typically in the range of \$12,000–\$16,000 a mile to cover the total operational costs.

### **Community Service Workers**

Community service workers are assigned by the court to pay off some of their sentence through maintenance activities in parks, such as picking up litter, removing graffiti, or assisting in painting or “fix-up” activities. Most workers are assigned 30–60 hours of work.

### **Park Admission Fees**

Admission fees to access programs and facilities are a well-accepted management tool based on the value of the experience and the level of exclusive use a user has compared to a general taxpayer.

### **Program Fees**

Fees to support the operations of a facility, park, or attraction can be applied to lessons, clinics, camps, and life skill, wellness, and fitness programs.

### **Race Sponsor Fees**

Race sponsor fees can be applied for various types of run/walk/bike races. The users pay a fee to participate, and race sponsors support the event itself. The city usually receives \$3–5 dollars per participant for exclusive use of a park for a run or walk event.

### **Lease of Office and Storage Space**

The City can consider leasing excess space to partner agencies and sports groups for offices and storage. Office space leases should be in the \$8–10 per square foot range and storage space leases in the \$3–4 per square foot range.

### **Rebuild Baseball in the Inner City**

The RBI program developed by Major League Baseball has helped rebuild inner city baseball and softball fields in many urban areas across the United States. The Indianapolis RBI program has redeveloped over 15 baseball/softball fields, significantly changing how these fields look and operate and increasing the participation of inner city youth in baseball and softball.

### **Redevelopment Funds**

Redevelopment money from a city or county redevelopment agency can be used for park and recreational facility development that spurs economic development in the area (e.g., sports tourism).

### **Bike Belong**

Located in Boulder, Colorado, Bike Belong is a not-for-profit group that makes small grants in the \$10,000 range for bike trails, bridges, and similar facilities to enable leveraging of federal funds.

### **American Hiking Society**

The American Hiking Society has a national fund devoted to promoting and protecting foot trails and the hiking experience.

### **The Helen R. Buck Foundation**

Provides funding for playground equipment and recreational activities.

### **Deupree Family Foundation**

Provides grants for recreation, parks/playgrounds, and children/youth on a national basis. This foundation provides funding and seed money for building/renovation, equipment, general/operating support, and program development.

### **The John P. Ellbogen Foundation**

Provides children/youth services grants as well as support for capital campaigns, general/operating support, and program development.

## **Federal Funding Sources**

A number of federal programs offer financial aid for projects that aim to improve community infrastructure, transportation, tourism, housing, and recreation. These programs include:

### **National Scenic Byways Program**

This program is designed to protect and enhance America's designated scenic roads. Money is available for planning, safety,

and facility improvements, cultural and historic resource protection, and tourism information signage. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities can be developed in conjunction with scenic roadway projects. Some states with scenic byway programs have developed greenways in conjunction with this initiative.

#### **Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)**

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) offers grants to communities for neighborhood revitalization, economic development, tourism, and improvements to community facilities and services, especially in low and moderate-income areas. Several communities have used HUD funds to develop greenways and tourism areas.

#### **Conservation Reserve Program**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), through its Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, provides payments to farm owners and operators to place highly erodible or environmentally sensitive landscapes into a 10–15 year conservation contract. The participant, in return for annual payments during this period, agrees to implement a conservation plan approved by the local conservation district for converting sensitive lands to less intensive uses. Individuals, associations, corporations, estates, trusts, cities, counties, and other entities are eligible for this program. Funds from this program can be used to fund the maintenance of open space and non-public-use greenways along bodies of water and ridge lines.

#### **Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention (Small Watersheds) Grants**

The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provides funding to state and local agencies or nonprofit organizations authorized to carry out, maintain, and operate watershed improvements involving less than 250,000 acres. The NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to eligible projects to improve watershed protection, flood prevention, sedimentation control, fish- and water-based wildlife enhancements, and recreation planning. The NRCS requires a 50% local match for public recreation and fish and wildlife projects.

#### **National Recreational Trails Program**

These grants are available to government and nonprofit agencies, for amounts ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000, for the building of a trail or trail segment. This is a reimbursement grant program (sponsor must fund 100% of the project up front) and requires a 20% local match. It is an annual program, with an application deadline at the end of January. The available funds are split such that 30% goes towards motorized trails, 30% to non-motorized trails, and 40% is discretionary for trail construction.

#### **Design Arts Program**

The National Endowment for the Arts provides grants to states and local agencies, individuals and nonprofit organizations for projects that incorporate urban design, historic preservation, planning, architecture, landscape architecture, and other community improvements, including greenway development. Grants to organizations and agencies must be matched by a 50% local contribution. Agencies can receive up to \$50,000.

#### **Community Forest and Open Space Program**

This federal grant program has estimated total program funding of \$3,150,000. Individual grant applications may not exceed \$400,000. The program pays up to 50% of the project costs and requires a 50% non-federal match. Eligible lands for grants funded under this program are private forests that are at least five acres in size, suitable to sustain natural vegetation, and at least 75% forested.

#### **Land and Water Conservation Fund**

These funds are to be utilized in the preservation, development, and renovation of outdoor recreation facilities, with a focus on America's Great Outdoors Initiative. Land and water conservation funds may be used to create new pavilions or renovate existing structures, playgrounds, or play areas, ball fields, bleachers, golf course meeting rooms, multi-purpose courts, parking facilities, pathways and trails, roads, signs, ski areas, snowmobile facilities, and tennis courts.



### Surface Transportation Program Transportation Alternatives Funds

Enhancement grants have been authorized under successive reauthorizations of the federal transportation program, most recently MAP-21 passed by Congress in 2012. These grants focus on constructing bicycle transportation facilities, pedestrian walkways, maps, brochures, educational activities, bike lanes, signage and bridges. The average grant size is \$300,000.

### Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program

This program funds transportation projects that improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion. Projects can include bicycle and pedestrian projects, trails, links to communities, bike rack facilities, etc. The average grant size is \$50-100,000.

### Community Facilities Grant and Loan Program

This program assists communities with grant and loan funding for the expansion, renovation and/or remodeling of former school facilities and/or existing surplus government facilities that have a current or future community use. Facilities may provide space for community gatherings and functions, as well as recreational athletic facilities for community members, particularly youth. Examples include space for nonprofit offices, child care, community education, theater, senior centers and youth centers, and after school programs. Match requirements for requests up to \$250,000 are 10% of eligible project costs. For requests between \$250,000 and \$1 million, the required match is 15%.

### Economic Development Grants for Public Works and Development of Facilities

The U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) provide grants to states, counties, and cities designated as redevelopment areas by EDA for public works projects that can include developing trails and greenway facilities. There is a 30% local match required, except in severely distressed areas, where the federal contribution can reach 80%.

## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Financial sustainability is a key issue for the Oklahoma City park system. While significant funding is being devoted to park-related capital projects through MAPS sales tax revenues, bond issues, basic capital, operations, and management expenditures, including maintenance, are well below levels of other comparable systems. The following principles provide a framework and guidance for the City of Oklahoma City in planning for the financial sustainability of the system.

- Diversify funding sources to support investment in existing parks, new facilities, and programs to meet community needs.
- Establish cost-benefit criteria to assess proposed capital improvement projects.
- Establish a maintenance endowment for existing parks and all new park development projects.
- Set cost recovery targets for the system as a whole and for key facilities, programs, and services.
- Develop true cost of service information (direct and indirect costs) on a per unit basis to determine levels of operational efficiency.
- Classify services as core essential, important, or value-added based on the level of benefit an individual user receives compared to the general taxpayer.
- Set a pricing policy for facilities, programs, and services based on the cost recovery targets, true cost of service information, and service classification.
- Develop business plans for revenue-producing facilities, programs, and events to optimize the revenue generated and the ability to manage the facility or program in a cost-effective manner.
- Develop financial criteria for partnerships and sponsorships, including tracking of costs vs. level of investment by the partner and the City.

- Where feasible and consistent with the cost recovery policy, design parks and facilities to produce revenue beyond what is needed to offset operational costs.
- Building on the measures defined in the existing Strategic Business Plan, develop financial and management performance metrics to track return on investment from dollars invested in the system.

The following are recommendations to help the Department become more financially self-sufficient and achieve a higher level of cost recovery. Key areas to address for the Department to achieve an optimal balance of financial sustainability and customer satisfaction include business development, program services, and park maintenance.

- A major opportunity for the system is to create programs that energize the community to use the parks and facilities at a higher level of productivity. The Department generates a low level of revenue from the participants in program services (\$41,000 in 2012) and does not have a high level of customer satisfaction (44%) with recreation facilities. This is largely due to many of the recreation facilities and pools being outdated. However, the programs and recreation services held in these facilities have a very high level of satisfaction (92%). The highly successful aquatic programming (including admissions) brings in an additional \$1.2 million.
- Programs drive the design of parks and recreation facilities. Therefore, designing parks and recreation facilities to meet program needs and generate revenue should be a higher priority. Based on the evaluation of the system, parks currently have more staffing and development than programs (although dollars spent on park and facility maintenance are relatively low). The low level of program development compared to other park systems is largely due to the numerous recreation partners (107) who provide the majority of recreation services on City-owned property. The City is mainly a facility provider and receives very little if any revenue in return from these partnerships. Partnership agreements should be as financially sustainable as possible and incorporate ways to recover capital as well as operational costs.

- A cost of service analysis should be conducted for recreational programs and services that the Department provides to determine direct and indirect costs incurred. Each program or service should be evaluated against set criteria to determine if it should be classified as “core essential,” “important,” or “value added” and then priced accordingly. Typical cost recovery levels are 0–20% for core essential services, 20–80% for important services, and 80–120%+ for value added services. This analysis can also help the Department in determining the right level of partnership equity when negotiating contracts with partners.

#### Core Services

*Programs, services, and facilities the Department must provide and/or are essential in order to capably run the Department. The failure to provide a core service at an adequate level would result in a significant negative consequence relative to the city's health and safety or economic and community vitality.*

##### Criteria

- The Department is mandated by law or charter or is contractually obligated by agreement to provide the service
- The service is essential to protecting and supporting the public's health and safety
- The service protects and maintains valuable city assets and infrastructure
- The city's residents, businesses customers, and partners reasonably expect and support the City in providing the service. The service cannot or should not be provided by the private sector and provides a sound investment of public funds.

#### Important Services

*Programs, services, and facilities the City should provide and are important to running the Department and effectively serving residents, businesses, customers, and partners. Providing important services expands or enhances the ability to provide and sustain the City's core services, health and safety, and economic and community vitality.*

##### Criteria

- The service provides, expands, enhances, or supports core services.
- The service is broadly supported and utilized by the community, and it is considered an appropriate, important, and valuable public good. Public support may be conditional upon the manner by which the service is paid for or funded.
- The service generates income or revenue that offsets some or all of its operating cost and/or is deemed to provide an economic, social, or environmental benefit to the community.

#### Value Added Services

*Discretionary programs, services, and facilities that the City may provide when additional funding or revenue exists to offset the cost of providing those services. Value added services provide value to residents, businesses, customers, and partners above and beyond what is required or expected.*

##### Criteria

- The service expands, enhances, or supports core services, important services, and the quality of life of the community.
- The service is supported, well-utilized by the community, and provides an appropriate and valuable public benefit.
- The service generates income or funding from sponsorships, grants, user fees, or other sources that offset some or all of its cost and/or provides a meaningful economic, social, or environmental benefit to the community.

- Cost recovery goals and pricing of facilities, programs, and services based on the cost of service analysis should be incorporated into the Strategic Business Plan and annual budgeting process.
- The use of technology in marketing and communications is an opportunity to build a stronger revenue base for the Department. Currently, marketing and communications and associated performance indicators are not included as a line of business in the Strategic Business Plan. With the many attractions that the City operates or is contracted for in the management of these attractions (golf courses, aquatic centers, botanical gardens, Myriad Botanical Gardens, Civic Center Music Hall, nature centers, Will Rogers Gardens, and special events), it is appropriate to develop a Marketing and Communications office. This office's responsibilities would include developing a marketing and branding campaign for the park system as a component of Oklahoma City's overall "brand" and appeal to existing and new residents and businesses. Enhancing the use of social media will keep marketing costs down and provide a new generation of users for the system.
- The Department does a good job of tracking and reporting performance measures through the Strategic Business Plan. The current measures could be enhanced through additional indicators focusing on outcomes, for example direct and indirect costs on a per unit basis (currently it appears that only direct costs are measured), costs and benefits of capital improvements, cost recovery and earned income to support operational and capital costs, and levels of productivity and efficiency. Additional factors that can be tracked include facility usage vs. capacity on a daily and weekly basis for golf, sports fields, aquatic centers, recreation facilities, and programs and cost per visitor experience (some of these are currently tracked). Marketing performance could be measured for return on investment (i.e. growth in users and revenues in relation to marketing dollars spent). Retention of users could also be used as a performance measure.
- Business plans should be developed for operating major facilities (e.g., regional parks, aquatic/multi-generational centers) and for staging programs or special events exceeding \$50,000 in costs to produce. The business plan will determine the true cost of providing the facility, program, or event and the level of cost recovery or tax subsidy required, so the Department can make a sound decision as to whether it should be involved based on cost/benefit to taxpayers.
- A business development office should be established to develop earned income opportunities and other diversified revenue options available to help offset operational and capital costs. In addition to exploring opportunities to apply the revenue generating opportunities listed above, this office would oversee development of business plans for major facilities and events. Similar functions in other park agencies typically return ten times the dollars invested in staff and administrative costs for the office.
- The departmental organization, including functions and job descriptions, should be revised to incorporate the above changes and generally to align with the desired outcomes. Staffing standards should be designed to place the right person, with the right skill set, into the right job, at the right pay to achieve the right outcome.

The above principles and recommendations are designed to reinforce a "business management" mind-set and "outcome-based" culture within the Department to enable it to more effectively carry out its mission.

## FUNDING SCENARIOS

Several illustrative scenarios for the Parks and Recreation Department budget were developed to test the levels of funding that will be required to meet current and future levels of service for Oklahoma City over a 20-year time horizon.

### Scenario A

Scenario A assumes that levels of funding and parks and recreation expenditures over the last five years will continue indefinitely. Because the Department's budget was essentially flat during this time period, this scenario results in a \$24 million annual budget and total spending of \$480 million over the 20-year plan time horizon. While requiring no new funding sources, this scenario is clearly unacceptable as it does not allow for additional investment to correct existing levels of service that are deficient, meet levels of service created by future population growth, or otherwise address community needs identified through the citizen survey. (It should be noted that this scenario does not account for MAPS spending on park-related projects.)

### Scenario B

Scenario B assumes an incremental increase of 5% a year in the Department's budget to allow for investment to address level of service and community needs for parks and recreation. In this scenario the budget increases from \$24 million in year 1 to \$60.6 million in year 20, with total spending of \$794 million over the 20-year time horizon.<sup>1</sup> While developed for illustrative purposes only, it is interesting to note that the scenario increases per capita spending on parks and recreation to \$81.40 for Oklahoma City's projected population of 743,902 in year 20. This would raise Oklahoma City above the norm for Midwestern cities, signifying a commitment to a best-of-class park system that supports both quality of life and a vigorous economy. Scenario B could be implemented by phasing in selected funding sources as listed above over time. The proposed Business Development Office should be put in place as an early implementation action to develop these funding sources, along with

the Marketing and Communications Office to promote involvement of residents, businesses, volunteers, etc. in the park system.

### Scenario C

Scenario B does not account for the full investment required to address deferred needs created by the historic pattern of underinvestment in the park system or the level of investment required to meet level of service needs of present and future Oklahoma City residents. Therefore, Scenario C was developed to characterize the level of investment required, using order-of-magnitude cost estimates for proposed capital investment, maintenance, and operations and management actions with significant cost implications identified in Chapter 7 of this *Parks Master Plan*.<sup>2</sup> These costs were added to a base of \$24 million/year (representing the current Parks and Recreation Department budget) to develop an overall estimate. The estimate assumes that capital investments and maintenance will be phased over 20 years. Using the phasing assumptions, the budget would average \$56 million per year, including \$40 million in the first year, \$71 million in year 10, and \$47 million in year 20. The total estimate for the 20-year time period is \$1.3 billion.

The table on the following pages presents the order-of-magnitude cost estimates, assumptions, and potential funding sources for the *Parks Master Plan* actions that are incorporated into Scenario C. As noted for Scenario B, the Business Development and Marketing and Communications Offices should be put in place as an early implementation action to generate resources to fund the *Parks Master Plan* actions.

<sup>1</sup> Scenarios have not been adjusted to account for inflation over 20 years (i.e. assume 2013 dollars).

<sup>2</sup> These costs are based on general "rules of thumb" and need to be further developed and refined for actual budgeting purposes.

## Scenario C Funding Assumptions

Action	Potential Funding Sources	Cost
<b>Strategic Direction 1: Maintain and improve physical assets of existing parks.</b>		
<b>Maintain Existing Parks</b>		
Maintain 70% of local and regional parks (2460 acres), down from 77%, at NRPA maintenance Mode II at an incremental cost of \$1294 per acre per year over the current \$3206 per acre per year, and maintain 30% of local and regional parks in an unmowed state, up from 23%, at a cost of \$800 per acre per year.	user fees, dedicated sales tax for maintenance, improvement districts and regular operating taxes	\$36,279,096
<b>Tree Planting and Replacement Program</b>		
Plant 1500 trees per year, for a total of 30000 new trees, at a cost of \$180 per tree.	land dedication fees, developer impact fees, property damage monies	\$5,400,000
Maintain 30000 new trees, at a cost of \$30 per tree per year.	business improvement districts, home owners fees, general taxes, boulevard tax	\$9,315,000
<b>Subtotal Strategic Direction 1</b>		<b>\$50,994,096</b>
<b>Strategic Direction 2: Develop facilities and programs in existing parks to meet community needs.</b>		
<b>Improvements to Existing Parks</b>		
Update playgrounds, lighting, restrooms, sports courts, loop trails, spray grounds, picnic areas, etc. in 60% of the local and regional parks (2460 acres) at \$50000 per acre.	dedicated capital improvement fees, users fees, maintenance endowments, permit fees, reservation fees, redevelopment funds	\$84,100,000
<b>Subtotal Strategic Direction 2</b>		<b>\$84,100,000</b>
<b>Strategic Direction 3: Improve access to existing parks.</b>		
<b>Sidewalk Connections to Parks</b>		
Construct 200 miles of new sidewalk in the central city, at a cost of \$260000 per mile.	dedicated sales tax, redevelopment funds, home owners fees, street funds	\$52,000,000
<b>Citywide Trail System</b>		
Construct 5 miles of new trails per year, for a total of 100 miles of new trails, at a cost of \$700000 per mile.	dedicated sales tax, Federal Transportation funds, greenway foundation, sale of greenway license plates, sale of development rights below the ground along the trails, trail sponsorships	\$70,000,000
Maintain 100 miles of new trails, at a cost of \$12000 per mile per year.	sponsorship of a mile of trail, land leases along the trail	\$12,600,000
<b>Subtotal Strategic Direction 3</b>		<b>\$134,600,000</b>



**Leading by example in fitness.**

Mayor Mick Cornett participates in a Total Fitness Camp led by the Police Athletic League at Seller's Community Center.

Action	Potential Funding Sources	Cost
<b>Strategic Direction 4: Promote and increase awareness of the value of parks.</b>		
<b>Marketing</b>		
Hire 3 new marketing staff members: one for social media, one for print media, and one for selling advertising, sponsorships, and tracking the costs of marketing and return on investment, at an annual cost of \$200000. Fund additional printing and other materials to promote the park system, at an annual cost of \$400000.	user fees, advertising sales, sponsorships, partnerships, registration fees	\$12,000,000
<b>Business Development</b>		
Hire 3 new business development staff member, at an annual cost of \$250000. (These positions should be able to produce 10 times their cost in revenue, or \$2500000.)	user fees, sponsorships, partnerships, advertising, grants	\$12,000,000
<b>Subtotal Strategic Direction 4</b>		<b>\$24,000,000</b>
<b>Strategic Direction 5: Develop new parks and facilities.</b>		
<b>Multi-Generational Centers</b>		
Construct one 80000 sq.ft. multi-generational center every other year, starting in year 4, for a total of 8 new multi-generational centers across the city, at a cost of \$350 per sq.ft.	bond issue, dedicated capital taxes, user fees, naming rights, foundations	\$224,000,000
Maintain 8 new multi-generational centers, assuming the City pays 30% of the annual \$2000000 per center cost and the rest of the cost is recovered through user fees.	user fees and membership fees	\$48,000,000
<b>Downtown (Core to Shore) Signature Parks</b>		
Construct new Central Park and Promenade Park according to the Core to Shore Plan.	dedicated sales tax, bond issue, business improvement district, conservancy	\$132,168,000
Maintain new Central Park and Promenade Park according to the Core to Shore Plan.	business improvement district, redevelopment funds, user fees, land leases, concessions	\$51,900,000
<b>New Local Parks</b>		
Acquire land for and construct 5 new local parks every 4 years, for a total of 25 new local parks, at about 10 acres per park, \$10000 per acre for acquisition, and \$100000 per acre for construction.	developer impact fees, bond issue, land dedication, private funding, gifts	\$27,500,000
Maintain 60% of 25 new local parks (250 acres) at NRPA maintenance Mode II, at a cost of \$4500 per acre per year, and maintain 40% in an unmowed state, at a cost of \$800 per acre per year.	dedicated sales taxes, user fees, partnerships	\$7,701,000
<b>New Regional Parks</b>		
Acquire land for and construct a new regional park every two years, starting in year 11, for a total of 5 new regional parks, at about 120 acres per park, \$10000 per acre for acquisition, and \$100000 per acre for construction.	developer impact fees, bond issue, land dedication, private funding, gifts	\$66,000,000
Maintain 60% of 5 new regional parks (600 acres) at NRPA maintenance Mode II, at a cost of \$4500 per acre per year, and maintain 40% in an unmowed state, at a cost of \$800 per acre per year.	dedicated sales taxes, user fees, partnerships, entrance fees, concessions	\$10,872,000
<b>Subtotal Strategic Direction 5</b>		<b>\$568,141,000</b>
<b>Subtotal Scenario C Costs Over 20 Years</b>		<b>\$863,835,096</b>
<b>Base (Current) Costs Over 20 Years</b>		<b>\$480,000,000</b>
<b>Total Cost Over 20 Years</b>		<b>\$1,343,835,096</b>





## 9. MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES

The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for maintaining not just the public parks in Oklahoma City, but also recreation facilities, land next to state highways, and the Civic Center. The Department's performance measures indicate the City spends an extremely low figure on park maintenance. Typically, urban park districts in the Midwest spend 2–3 times as much as Oklahoma City does to maintain their parks.



The Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Department spends an average of \$1,421 an acre on all park maintenance annually, an extremely low figure accounting for the relatively low level of customer satisfaction with maintenance at 63%. Currently the City budgets \$3,225 dollars an acre to maintain neighborhood parks, \$2,031 an acre to maintain community parks, and \$2,435 per acre to maintain district parks. Typically, urban park districts in the Midwest maintain neighborhood parks at \$5,000–6,000 an acre, community and regional parks at \$4,000–5,000 an acre, sports fields at \$9,000–10,000 an acre, and pathway/trail systems at \$8,000 a mile.

The Department has some good maintenance standards and procedures in place, including a Grounds Procedure Manual, mowing frequency standards, and performance measures for maintenance activities, although some standards are low. These standards indicate that community and district parks are mowed every two weeks, neighborhood parks are mowed every three weeks, and trails are maintained on a three-week schedule. High visibility locations (parks in Downtown and Bricktown, swimming pool locations, river trails) are mowed on a one-week schedule.

Most of the Oklahoma City park system, with the exception of the high visibility locations, is maintained at the equivalent of Mode III according to National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) maintenance standards for frequency of tasks such as mowing, trimming, landscaping, and grounds maintenance care. This is a much lower level of care than in other similar urban park systems in the Midwest. The consultant team recommends that the maintenance level be raised to NRPA Mode II for most maintained areas of the park system, with very high visibility locations receiving a Mode I standard of care. Achieving these standards will require that more funding be dedicated for maintenance purposes (potential funding sources are identified in Chapter 8). It should be noted that the recommendation to increase the percentage of natural areas within the park system will reduce the number of acres requiring more costly maintenance.

It is also recommended that standards be developed for additional maintenance tasks to augment the current procedures. These include standards and frequency rates for the care of all types of parks, park amenities, sports fields, trails, recreation centers,

tree care, pools, and concession operations, as well as program standards. Putting these standards in place will help support the need for appropriate levels of staffing, help to price services against the benefits received, and increase levels of customer satisfaction. Current satisfaction levels are 63% for the care of parks, 52% for trails, 46% for aquatic programs, 47% for sports programs, and 44% for recreation centers—all of which show room for improvement. By contrast, special event satisfaction is 94% and senior program services satisfaction is 99%, which are extremely high levels.

In addition to the standards and procedures for properties it maintains, the Department has established maintenance requirements for parks or areas of parks managed by private/not-for-profit organizations such as Myriad Botanical Gardens, Crystal Lake, and sports field leases. These arrangements benefit residents because the organizations provide some, if not all, of the resources needed to maintain the properties at a higher level than the City is capable of providing given its current budget. Many cities provide nice incentives to entice partnerships for improving and sponsoring community parks. Chapter 10 provides recommendations for criteria to more explicitly define the partnership responsibilities of the organizations and the City. A key to the future of these partnerships is to ensure sufficient funding for maintenance and improvement of site infrastructure in order to position the sites as valuable assets that demonstrate a high quality park system.

Another avenue that the Department could explore to improve the level of maintenance and increase the efficiency of dollars spent is to use volunteers or correctional workers on certain tasks. Based on the \$5.39 cost per square foot to maintain the gardens in the City (as opposed to typical best practice costs of \$3.50–\$4.00 per square costs), this may be an area for an enhanced volunteer program to bring costs down. Volunteerism is not currently listed as a line of business in the City's Strategic Business Plan. Typically, many agencies have full-time staff that recruit, train, and place volunteers in their system, as well as track the number of hours performed and the satisfaction level of volunteers. Volunteers are described by some park and recreation agencies as the next major work force. This may be an opportunity for Oklahoma City to build efficiencies through the use of volunteers in activities such as special event management, park maintenance, trail maintenance, and senior program services.

#### **Keeping parks pristine.**

Ongoing maintenance is necessary to meet public expectations and keep parks looking their best, which can be a challenge given limited budgets.



## 10. PARTNERSHIPS

In earlier decades, some cities were fully responsible for the operation of their parks, and they had funding commensurate with the job. Today that is rare, and most cities need the extra assistance of public-private and public-public partnerships to help with the task at hand. These partnerships should never supplant the leadership and the preeminence of the Parks and Recreation Department, but they can help make the difference between a park system that struggles and one that sparkles. This chapter covers partnerships generally and then makes some specific recommendations for Oklahoma City.

## OVERVIEW OF PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

### Friends Organizations

When it comes to support, friends organizations are the basic building block of every park system. Ideally, every park should have one—a group of neighbors who essentially adopt the park, look out for it, report problems, organize volunteer events, and keep the space activated and welcoming. Friends groups can also double as political activists at budget time, either supporting an appropriation or complaining if the funding is not sufficient for the need. In most neighborhoods, the friends group will be relatively loosely structured with volunteers for various tasks. In a larger, denser, or wealthier place, the group might possibly have a paid staff member or two and take on explicit programs for the park.

### Service Providers

There are numerous service providing organizations that are potential natural partners with park agencies—groups that offer youth sports, adult sports, exercise, dance, swimming, senior programs, meditation, arts, child care, learning, environmental education, nature appreciation, and much more. Between the open-air parks, trails, pools and fields, and indoor recreation centers, there are scores of facilities and locations that are ideal for these activities. And, in these days of constricted budgets, the parks and recreation department frequently does not have the funds or staffing to offer all the courses and sports that people desire. A partnership in this context is ideal—preferably one that explicitly shares in the recognition (via signage and advertising) and that also provides appropriate financial remuneration to both parties to cover their costs. Oklahoma City already makes extensive use of partnerships in its park system, having contracts with approximately 170 partners, of which over 100 are recreation service providers. Since Oklahoma City has thousands of acres of parkland and hundreds of facilities, many of which are underused at certain times of the day or the week, it makes sense for the Parks and Recreation Department to have one or more staff persons who aggressively undertake outreach to all kinds of service providers to let them know about land and facility opportunities. The more that Oklahoma City parks are associated with fun and activity, the better it is for everyone.

### Corporations, Corporate Foundations and Philanthropies

Some corporations are intimately associated with Oklahoma City since their headquarters are here or they have deep historical roots here. Others may simply have a large presence or wish to be better known in the region. Regardless of the motivation, some corporations are willing or eager to become a park partner, usually by making a financial donation for some kind of capital improvement—buying land, building a structure, providing artwork or a fountain, donating a pond, planting a garden, or carrying out dozens of other enhancements. In Chicago's Millennium Park the gifts totaled over \$200 million, with corporations vying with each other for recognition and for the support and love of the public. Again, the Parks and Recreation Department must always remain the primary decision-making entity, and no gift should be accepted that is not first and foremost in the best interest of the park, but within these constraints corporate contributions (including the donation of working time by employees and their families) can be of great benefit to the city and its parks. Ideally, a corporation or foundation would not take on the entire burden of building or upgrading the park but would use its largess as a challenge gift to stimulate the expenditure of taxpayer funds as well. It is important that parks retain their image as public facilities that provide beauty and value for and by all citizens.

### Conservancies

The “Cadillac” of public-private partnerships are park conservancies, where a group of wealthier individuals and institutions form an entity to assist the City in the refurbishment and ongoing maintenance of a park. (Conservancies are usually formed for the single pre-eminent park in a city, although in some places they adopt a number of parks.) Most conservancies begin by taking on a specific capital improvement or repair (such as an intricate non-working fountain, a rundown sports complex, an ecologically damaged lake, or something similar) and then—upon proving their competence and sensitivity to the public—move on to handling more routine day-to-day matters like gardening, cleaning, planting, and sweeping. This gradual phase-in of responsibilities and authority is important in helping the public feel comfortable with the changes—and helping the conservancy learn what is acceptable and what is not (e.g., closing portions of a park for a special event, etc.).

## Public-Public Partnerships

The private sector is not the only entity that can work cooperatively with a parks and recreation department. There are also many public agencies that can benefit from a partnership. For instance, water departments may find it useful to build reservoirs on (or under) parkland, or find it useful to route stormwater onto parkland—and pay a fee in return for this service. Transportation departments might benefit from having bicycle commuter trails located on parkland—and they might be willing to pay the costs rather than having to widen a bridge or a road for all the extra automobiles. Health departments and public hospitals might decide to undertake fitness, weight loss, and other similar programs on parkland. Nutrition agencies might want to establish community gardens in parks.

## A Parks Foundation

A growing number of cities have a formal parks foundation, an entity with money and connections that can do some or all of the things mentioned above—raise money for capital improvements, accept donations of land and money, promote parks to the general public, inform elected officials about the importance and benefits of parks, serve as a meeting place for different park advocates with different ideas, and much more.

# PARTNERSHIP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OKLAHOMA CITY PARKS

## Friends Organizations

The first task is to determine the exact number of existing park friends organizations, along with the names and contact information of each of their leaders. (This effort might be done in conjunction with the Neighborhood Alliance.) Next, an entity such as Oklahoma City Beautiful or the Oklahoma City Community Foundation should step up (on either a permanent or an interim basis) to serve as an umbrella friends entity—a convener and information disseminator for all the current and future local park friends groups. Ideally, this entity would evolve into Friends of Oklahoma City Parks with a small staff and a dynamic, community-based board of directors consisting of leaders from the individual friends groups. In addition

to direct service in the parks, the primary role of the friends groups is to be a strong advocate for parks in the city—always pressing for park improvements and also working to make sure the park budget is supported by the politicians. These friends groups, along with advocacy organizations as the Conservation Commission, the Ground Water Protection Council, the Environmental Federation of Oklahoma, and the Central Oklahoma Master Conservancy District (see below), can also use newsletters, web pages, lecture series, and other outreach strategies to spread the word about park opportunities and events to the entire community.

## Service Providers

Since Oklahoma City is on the low side of public park spending, the city is more dependent upon outside service providers to fill the gaps in providing an outstanding park and recreation system. In some cases the services are offered at market price; in others, philanthropy might allow them to be provided for free or at below-market rates. In Oklahoma City there are already relationships with numerous service providers, many of them in the recreation arena, such as the YMCA/YWCA, the Boys and Girls Clubs, and others. Programs range from Little League baseball to tennis, bicycling, soccer, Pop Warner football, swimming, and more, for youth and even adults. Recommendations for criteria to apply to partnerships in Oklahoma City parks are provided below and are especially relevant to service providers.

## Corporations, Corporate Foundations, and Philanthropies

Among the largest corporations in greater Oklahoma City are Devon Energy, Chesapeake Energy, OGE Energy, Love's Travel Stops, and Sonic. Among the companies with the largest local workforces are Integris Health, Chesapeake Energy, Hobby Lobby Stores, Mercy Health Center, OGE Energy, Devon Energy, AT&T, SSM Health Care, and Sonic Corp. There are also public employers with very large workforces, including the state of Oklahoma, the City of Oklahoma City, Tinker Air Force Base, Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center, and the University of Oklahoma (including its Health Sciences Center). All of these institutions, as well as much small ones, can serve as outstanding partners to the Parks and Recreation Department,





either by adopting a particular nearby park or by helping out with specific tasks for the entire system. The partnerships can take many forms: financial gifts; employee work days; donation of services such as printing, mailing, signs, banners, and recreation supplies; public service announcements; and much more. These corporate leaders are often also, of course, the movers and shakers of the social and political worlds of Oklahoma City. So they—Oklahoma City Convention and Visitors Bureau, and other business clubs and organizations—should play a significant role in advocating for more parks and park improvements, and also in publicizing the existing parks and programs near and far. Also, the Science Museum of Oklahoma could play a crucial role in spreading the word about the ecological value of parks.

Partnerships with health-oriented companies are particularly relevant. Some doctors have been “prescribing”—literally!—exercise in parks for certain kinds of physical or mental issues. In other cases, a hospital or clinic might be located very near a park and might even enter into a partnership to help create or upgrade a walking or bicycling trail, or install a “Fitness Zone” of outdoor gym equipment, or sponsor some recreational programming for patients and others.

### Conservancies

Oklahoma City already has one major park conservancy, the Myriad Gardens Foundation. (Although it doesn’t use the word “conservancy,” it acts like one.) This foundation, which had previously existed for many years in a less visible role as an adjunct to the Parks and Recreation Department, was substantially reformed and upgraded in conjunction with the erection of the Devon Energy Center and the refurbishment of Myriad Botanical Gardens. Its goal is to raise two-thirds of its \$3.6-million budget from private sources and completely handle the maintenance and programming of the park. By continually working to make Myriad Botanical Gardens into an outstanding and well-known public space that defines park excellence, the Foundation could serve to “raise the tide” for all the parks in the city. For instance, certain events like marathons, runs, and bicycle rides could begin and end at Myriad Botanical Gardens while also following a route that passes through other city parks, introducing them to the public.

While there is probably no other park of such city-wide significance, it is conceivable that a conservancy could be created for Oklahoma City’s four major parks from the W.H. Dunn plan of 1910—Lincoln, Trosper, Woodson, and Will Rogers. Perhaps it could be called the Dunn Parks Conservancy. (This would be similar to the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, which supports four major parks in Pittsburgh.) While the four parks would be fully owned and operated by the Parks and Recreation Department, the conservancy could undertake major capital projects, such as upgrades and repairs, thus taking some of the financial burden off the shoulders of the City. This is a model that has been used in numerous places, including Atlanta, Houston, New York, St. Louis, Boston, and Philadelphia.

### Public-Public Partnerships

Three obvious partnerships between the Parks and Recreation Department and other public entities would involve school districts, the City-County Health Department, and the Public Works Department in its role as manager of the city’s transportation infrastructure.

Schools are key because they have considerable amounts of land, are well located and embedded in their communities, and have access to the majority of young people. In Oklahoma City, as in other communities, school districts manage their land and facilities independent from city government. An increasing number of cities are implementing joint-use agreements between their parks department and schools regarding schoolyards, whereby the play areas are locked for school-only use during school hours and then unlocked for community use after school, on weekends, and during vacations. Particularly in dense urban areas, these “school parks” often offer the only feasible space to play and socialize in the already built-up development around them. One problem in Oklahoma City is that some of the schools are designed in such a way that the schoolyard/playground is in the “back” of the school, away from the street, and not visible to parents and others from the roadway and school front. This causes some safety concerns and might entail some environmental redesign of either the space or the roadway.

The Oklahoma City-County Health Department (OCCHD) could also be an excellent partner, since both it and the recreation agency have a mandate to help people become and remain healthier throughout

#### Benefitting from partnerships.

A state-of-the-art universal playground on the east side of Lake Hefner was funded thanks to the efforts of individual Lions Club members and local corporate partners working in concert with the Parks and Recreation Department.

their lives. The OCCHD can provide exercise programming, but it does not have its own properties to utilize—particularly outdoor space. Doing this would serve the double benefit of making people healthier and activating the park space to make it safer and more inviting. Oklahoma City already has its “One Million Pound” weight-loss challenge, which is a natural for a partnership between parks and the health department. Instead of simply installing “wellness centers” that are similar to traditional clinics, the joint program could result in more holistic centers that offer numerous kinds of fitness activities (along with healthy food choices).

The Public Works Department can play a major role in the provision of non-motorized trails for walking, running, and bicycling, both on parks and between them. There may also be abandoned railroad or canal corridors available for conversion to park trails utilizing funding and the engineering expertise of the Department. Alternatively, the Department may be able to take on some of the responsibilities of planting and maintaining beautiful rows of street trees in some of Oklahoma City’s boulevard and parkways, like Grand Boulevard. (This could be done in conjunction with the Margaret Annis Boys Trust and/or a tree advocacy organization. See below.)

Another good partner could be local community colleges and universities, whose marketing students might prove adept at getting out much more information about parks, recreation events, conservation issues, and more. Alternatively, business students at the schools might be able to help the Department devise new forms of revenue enhancement activities.

## A Parks Foundation

The Oklahoma City Community Foundation has established a parks foundation to assist neighborhood and community parks, but it is not active. The Oklahoma City Parks Foundation—comparable to existing such entities in Houston, Cincinnati, Seattle, Portland, Los Angeles, and other cities—would provide a tremendous boost to the city’s park scene. There are likely residents of Oklahoma City who would be willing to make a special donation for parks but are reluctant to contribute directly to the City or the Parks and Recreation Department since they worry their gift might be used for something else. Having an official foundation that is separate from, but that works closely and cooperatively with, the City on the most badly needed projects

is a proven way to make key improvements. The existing Margaret Annis Boys Trust is a start in the right direction, but an active, well-rounded parks foundation could do much more, from acquiring and transferring land to undertaking certain kinds of construction, from making repairs to commissioning artwork, from creating programs to sponsoring holiday celebrations and special events. Positioning the Parks Foundation as the lead organization (“strong and nimble quarterback”) to coordinate the efforts of the other partners could make a tremendous difference in what the City can accomplish for its parks and its people. One possible way of initially “activating” the parks foundation would be to task it simply with spreading the message of the existence and value of Oklahoma City’s parks and programs. It could then move on to more substantial efforts.

## Advocacy Organizations

While park and environmental advocacy organizations are not traditional partners with public agencies, they are a large and growing presence in the world of urban parks throughout the nation, and this is the logical place to acknowledge them. Advocacy groups can be considered partners in the sense that they—like the Department—are deeply committed to a strong, beautiful, useful, and environmentally beneficial park system. While the advocates’ roles and capabilities may be very different from the Department’s, they can often provide the kind of public support that raises the tide for everyone—even if there are the occasional rough edges regarding political and funding issues. Among the many organizations that could help Oklahoma City parks are OKC Beautiful, the Arbor Day Foundation, the Treebank Foundation, and the Oklahoma Urban and Community Forestry Council for tree planting and tree care; the Nature Conservancy for natural protection, enhancement, and interpretation; and, ideally, a cadre of park friends organizations watching over and speaking up for each individual park in the system.

## PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

While existing partners perform an extremely useful function by providing facilities and programs for the public in Oklahoma City parks, both the City and its partners would benefit from more explicit criteria that define expectations for levels of partnership equity, performance, and measurable outcomes for each partnership. One issue that needs to be addressed is the recognition that the parks and recreation system receives from partners who manage facilities and programs on City-owned property. New, more explicit criteria should include consistency with all relevant Parks and Recreation Department policies plus the following:

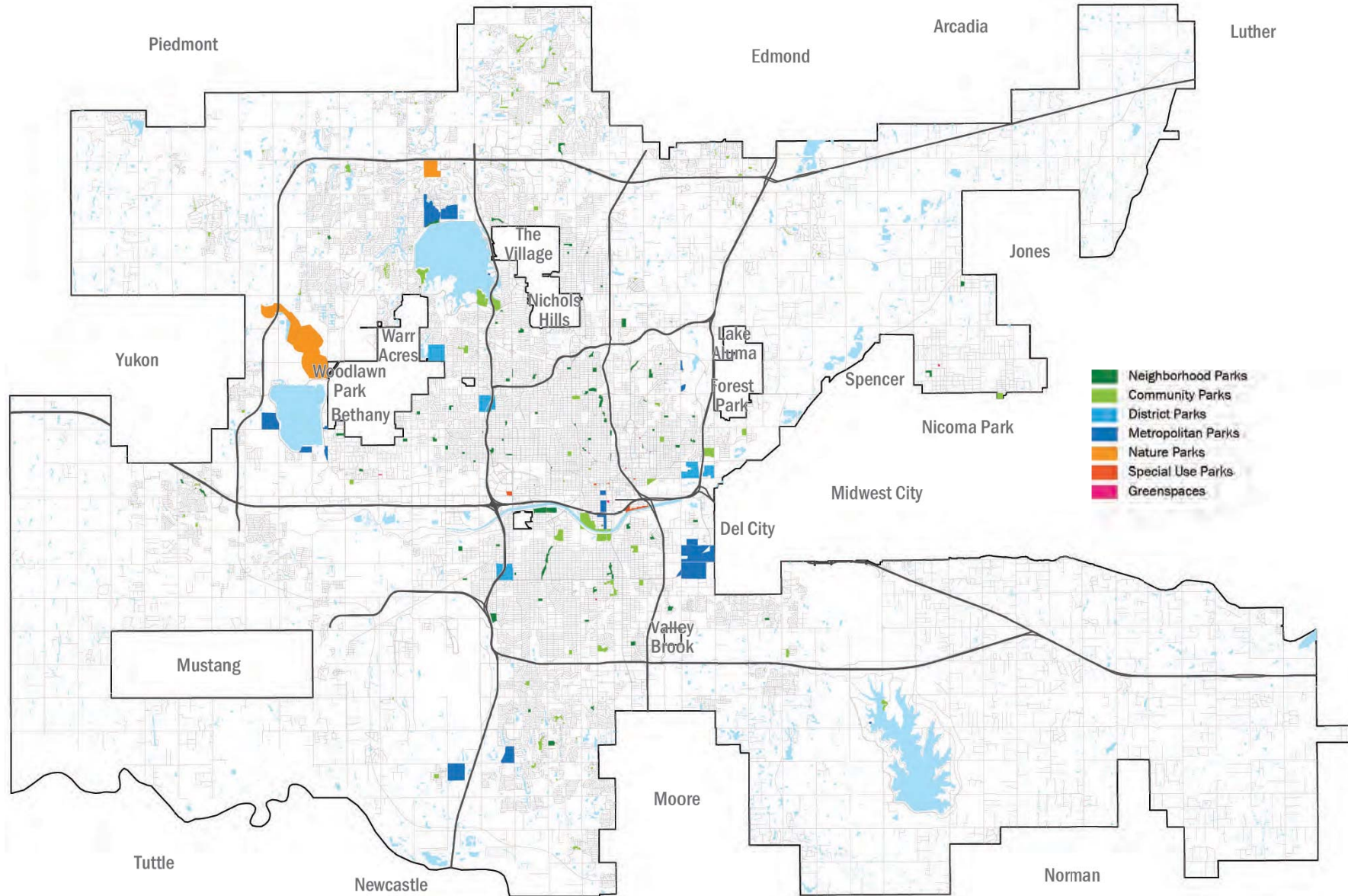
1. What is the partner's mission and goal for the partnership, and how does it support the Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Department's mission and goals?
2. To whom does the partner target its services, and what is the value of the targeted users to the Department and Oklahoma City?
3. What benefits will the Department and partner achieve by partnering together?
4. What outcomes will be measured to define the benefits for the Department and the partner?
5. What are the costs for the partner and for the Department, and what level of equity will each partner contribute to the relationship?

The Department should apply these criteria to all new contracts, and it should also update the existing service provider agreements to address these five questions. It should then track the results on a yearly basis.



# 11.APPENDICES

Park Classifications



# A. PARK CLASSIFICATION LIST

## NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Park Name	Address	Ward	Acres
Airport Heights Park	3605 S SHAWNEE AVE	3	3.4
Alice Ham Park	926 NW 15TH ST	6	2.2
Bob Akers Park	2408 SE 11TH ST	7	4.6
Britton Park	1301 NW 96TH ST	2	1.4
Brock Park	1601 SW 25TH ST	6	31.7
Brookwood Park	9600 S SHARTEL AVE	5	3.7
Burton/Britton Park	620 NW 99TH ST	7	1.2
Campbell Park	41 W PARK PL	6	2.2
Creston Hills Park	2240 NE 18TH ST	7	4.7
Crown Heights Park	3725 N WALKER AVE	2	16.4
Denniston Park	2609 DENNISTON DR	2	3
Dolphin Wharton Park	301 NE 63RD ST	7	19.3
Douglas Park	500 NW 47TH ST	2	8.4
E.B. Jeffrey Park	1600 N MERIDIAN AVE	3	4.7
E.W. Perry Park	1329 NE 48TH ST	7	2.2
Edgemere Park	3421 N HARVEY PKWY	2	15.9
Elm Grove Park	710 S PENNSYLVANIA AVE	6	23.5
Flower Garden Park	4711 N CLASSEN BLVD	2	3.7
Geraldine Park	3203 N GERALDINE AVE	2	6
Girvin Park	3400 NW 14TH ST	6	5.9
Glen Ellyn Park	2300 GLEN ELLYN ST	7	2
Goodholm Park	2701 N ROBINSON AVE	2	4.4

Park Name	Address	Ward	Acres
Grant Corbin Park	4032 NW 13TH ST	3	2.2
Green's Tot-Lot Park	13044 BURLINGAME AVE	8	0.7
Guilchester Park	2716 DORCHESTER DR	2	0.3
Harden Park	2801 CRESTON DR	7	2.1
Harlow Park	4800 NW 19TH ST	3	7.2
Harvest Hills Park	8235 NW 104TH ST	1	4.3
Highley Park	1934 NW 8TH ST	6	0.9
Hiram Park	8200 HAPPY LN	7	9.1
Hosea Vinyard Park	4201 S WALKER AVE	4	7.7
J.B. Black Park	2121 N COUNCIL RD	1	9.6
Jack W. Cornett Park	3001 N GROVE AVE	3	5.4
John F. Kennedy Park	1824 NE 16TH ST	7	5.5
L.D. Lacy Park	1114 NE 43RD ST	7	13
Lakeshore Estates Park	8115 W LAKE HEFNER DR	1	1
Lela Park	1801 N LELA AVE	3	7
Lippert Park	5501 S SHARTEL AVE	4	3.7
Lorraine Thomas Park	2350 S INDEPENDENCE AVE	6	3.9
Luther Dulaney Park	2931 NW 41ST ST	2	5.5
Lytle Park	801 GREENVALE RD	1	4.5
Mackleman Park	5501 MACKLEMAN DR	4	5
Manuel Perez Park	301 SW 14TH ST	6	0.8
Mark Twain Park	2402 NW 1ST ST	6	0.3

Park Name	Address	Ward	Acres
May Park	2817 SW 34TH ST	6	1.4
Mayfair Park	4510 N MAYFAIR DR	2	1.8
Mayview Park	3135 NW 73RD ST	2	1.4
McCracken Park	425 SE 64TH ST	4	9
McMechan Park	1601 MCMECHAN PKWY	7	1
McNabb Park	901 NE 33RD ST	7	1
Meadowbrook Park	3809 NW 10TH ST	3	1.8
Merrel Medley Park	11100 S PENNSYLVANIA AVE	5	15.6
Military Park	1200 NW 25TH ST	2	1
North Highland Park	8200 N HARVEY AVE	7	2
Oliver Park	3201 S BROADWAY AVE	4	16.6
Pat Murphy Park	4551 W HEFNER RD	8	12.3
Perle Mesta Park	1900 N SHARTEL AVE	6	3
Phillips Park	2808 N PROSPECT AVE	7	3.9
Pied Piper Park	1303 NW 100TH ST	2	6.8
Progressive Community Park	4401 LENOX AVE	7	11.8
Quail Creek Park	11130 QUAIL CREEK RD	8	10.3
Redlands Park	1423 NW 141ST ST	8	16.5
Reed Park	1217 N MAY AVE	6	2.5
Rhode Island Park	6623 N RHODE ISLAND AVE	7	0.4

## COMMUNITY PARKS

Park Name	Address	Ward	Acres
Diggs Park	2201 N COLTRANE RD	7	14.7
Draper Park	3816 S ROBINSON AVE	4	30
Edwards Park	1515 N BRYANT AVE	7	45.5
Hathaway Park	3730 S LINDSAY AVE	7	13
Hefner Park	3301 NW GRAND BLVD	2	31
Macklanburg Park	2234 NW 117THST	2	9.2
McKinley Park	1300 N MCKINLEY AVE	6	9.3
Melrose Park	7800 MELROSE LN	1	8.7
Memorial Park	1152 NW 36TH ST	2	15.7
Minnis Lakeview Park	12520 NE 36TH ST	7	19.6
North Rotary Park	5708 N TULSA AVE	1 & 2	20.4
Northeast Center Park	1300 NE 33RD ST	7	10.6

Park Name	Address	Ward	Acres
River Park	800 S AGNEW AVE	6	25.3
Ross Park	2701 NW 62ND ST	2	9.3
Rotary Playground Park	416 SE 15TH ST	7	8.4
Saint Clair Park	2212 N ST CLAIR AVE	6	0.5
Shallowbrook Park	4901 S SHALLOW BROOK DR	4	10
Siler Park	9600 S FAIRVIEW DR	5	4
Smitty Park	4500 N BILLEN AVE	2	5.5
Sparrow Park	300 NW 30TH ST	2	2.6
Swatek Park	2301 NW 29TH ST	2	2.7
Syl Goldman Park	5333 S INDEPENDENCE AVE	3	23
Tinsley Park	3300 NW 65TH ST	2	2
Top O' Town Park	2102 S EVEREST AVE	7	5
Tulsa Park	2409 S TULSA AVE	3	9.7
Wayman's Park	1900 N DREXEL BLVD	6	1.8
Winans Park	2100 N BROADWAY AVE	6	4
Woodland Park	730 NE 50TH ST	7	7
Woodrun Park	4 N WILLOWOOD DR	1	12
Youngs Park	4610 S YOUNGS BLVD	6	12.7
Zach D. Taylor	633 NW 52ND ST	2	5.6
Zurline Park	2800 S WOODWARD AVE	6	4.4

Park Name	Address	Ward	Acres
Pilot Center Park	1435 NW 2ND ST	6	1.1
Pitts Park	1920 N KATE AVE	7	10.8
Red Andrews Park	720 NW 8TH ST	6	2.3
Schilling Park	601 SE 25TH ST	7	22.7
Sellers Park	8301 S VILLA AVE	5	8.5
South Rotary Park	1604 SW 15TH ST	6	43
Southern Oaks Park	6818 S WALKER AVE	5	23
Stars & Stripes Park	3701 S LAKE HEFNER	1 & 2	69.4
Taylor Park	1115 SW 70TH ST	5	7
Washington Park	400 N HIGH AVE	7	21
Wheeler Park	1120 S WESTERN AVE	6	103
Wiley Post	1705 S ROBINSON AVE	4	65



## DISTRICT PARKS

Park Name	Address	Ward	Acres
Dolese Youth Park	4701 NW 50TH ST	1	156.5
Douglass Park	900 FREDERICK DOUGLASS AVE	7	117

Park Name	Address	Ward	Acres
Will Rogers Park	3400 N PORTLAND AVE	2	122
Woodson Park	3401 S MAY AVE	3	124

## METROPOLITAN PARKS

Park Name	Address	Ward	Acres
Bluff Creek Park	11620 N MERIDIAN AVE	8	294.2
Earlywine Park	3033 SW 119TH ST	5	99
Lake Hefner Lions Childrens Playground	9050 LAKE HEFNER PKWY	8	3
Lake Stanley Draper Park (Concession/Playground)	8301 SE 104TH ST	4	1
Lake Stanley Draper Park (North Point)	8255 SE 104TH ST	4	2

Park Name	Address	Ward	Acres
Lincoln Park	4712 N MLK AVE	7	22
Myriad Botanical Gardens	301 W RENO AVE	6	17
Overholser Park	2402 E OVERHOLSER DR	1	61.8
Route 66 Park	9901 NW 23RD ST	1	146
South Lakes Park	4302 SW 119TH ST	3	158
Trosper Park	2812 S EASTERN AVE	7	366

## NATURE PARKS

Park Name	Address	Ward	Acres
Martin Nature Park	4700 W MEMORIAL RD	8	138

Park Name	Address	Ward	Acres
Stinchcomb Wildlife Refuge	5101 N STINCHCOMB AVE	1	988

## SPECIAL USE PARKS

Park Name	Address	Ward	Acres
Bicentennial Park	500 COUCH DR	6	1.8
Couch Park	210 N ROBINSON AVE	6	0.6
Foster Center	614 NE 4TH ST	7	0.8

Park Name	Address	Ward	Acres
Kerr Park	102 ROBERT S KERR AVE	6	0.6
Regatta Park	701 S LINCOLN BLVD	7	28

## GREENSPACES

Park Name	Address	Ward	Acres
Crossroad Sports Complex	120 SE 89TH ST	4	48.8
Culbertson Park	1101 NE 13TH ST	7	0.3
Draper Memorial Park	100 SW 3RD ST	6	2
Florence Park	820 NW 15TH ST	6	0.3
Joe Louis Park (Surplus)	10810 NE 48TH ST	7	1.9
Lightning Creek Park	8100 S WESTERN AVE	5	34
Mike Dover Park	4601 S WALKER AVE	4	1.7

Park Name	Address	Ward	Acres
Nichols Court Park	1901 CULBERTSON DR	7	0.7
O'Neil Park	725 NW 13TH ST	6	0.5
Rockwell Park	618 N ROCKWELL AVE	3	2.3
Stiles Circle Park	379 N STILES	7	0.7
Straka Detention Pond	1203 SW 84TH ST	5	24.3
Ted Reynolds Park	3005 W RENO AVE	6	11



## B. FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

This appendix presents a financial overview of the City of Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Department. The revenues and expenditures were analyzed to assess the Department’s financial integrity. The cost recovery for facilities, programs and services at major functional levels has been analyzed to assess the cost of service readiness.

### DATA REVIEWED

PROS Consulting reviewed the detailed cost and activity information prepared by Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Department staff. Following is a list of the cost and activity data reviewed by PROS:

- Revenue and Expenditure Report for 2012
- City Budgets 2009-2013

### OPERATING EXPENDITURES

#### Historical Expenses from Fiscal Years Ending 2008 through 2012

Source: Annual Budgets	FY 07-08	FY 08-09	FY 09-10	FY 10-11	FY 11-12
<b>Operating Expenditures</b>					
Administration	\$4,288,948	\$4,409,819	\$3,874,181	\$3,794,670	\$3,802,934
Horticulture & Gardens	1,530,162	1,835,371	1,736,461	1,636,742	2,546,556
Civic Center Music Hall	2,084,030	2,500,880	2,559,833	2,404,400	2,477,567
Grounds Maintenance	9,046,565	9,001,386	8,360,948	7,916,515	8,846,181
Recreation	4,859,750	4,785,731	4,912,096	4,881,277	4,988,633
<b>Total Operating Expenditures</b>	<b>\$21,809,455</b>	<b>\$22,533,187</b>	<b>\$21,443,519</b>	<b>\$20,633,604</b>	<b>\$22,661,871</b>
Capital Expenditures	1,144,449	650,416	1,050,057	214,684	189,407
Non-Operating Expenditures	59,565	114,920	93,371	241,592	1,036,863
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$23,013,469</b>	<b>\$23,298,523</b>	<b>\$22,586,947</b>	<b>\$21,089,880</b>	<b>\$23,888,141</b>

The capital expenditures compared to operation and maintenance expenditures have decreased significantly over the five year period. This is a reflection of the Department's ability to maintain and replace the current equipment and facilities.

## COST RECOVERY FROM EARNED INCOME

The industry best practices are 35–40% for cost recovery from revenues other than taxes for similar park and recreation agencies. Non-tax revenues, which exclude revenues from property taxes, were 46% of expenditures in 2012. The table below shows the Department's cost recovery from non-tax revenues by major funding sources.

### Department Cost Recovery

Fund	Revenue	Budget	Recovery %
General Fund	\$1,259,810	\$23,142,479	5%
Special Purpose Fund (donations, park land sales)	1,064,619	2,941,245	36%
OCMFA (oil and gas Royalties)	916,917	2,155,893	43%
OCPPA (golf and Civic Center Music Hall)	15,726,695	13,399,607	117%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$18,968,040</b>	<b>\$41,639,224</b>	<b>46%</b>

The industry best practices for private benefit programs and services are 100% or greater cost recovery from revenues other than taxes for similar park and recreation agencies. The table below shows that the Department's cost recovery of the selected programs from non-tax revenues is 83% to 103% of the total operating expenses.

### Cost Recovery of Selected Programs

Program	Revenues	Expenditures	Revenues Over/Under Expenditures	Cost Recovery
Civic Center/Rose State	\$2,047,376	\$2,477,567	-\$430,191	83%
Golf	12,802,685	12,464,128	338,557	103%
Water Taxi	714,496	805,946	-91,450	89%

## C. ACTION TABLES

Strategic Direction 1: Maintain and improve physical assets of existing parks.						
Action Steps	Method	Responsible Parties	Potential Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Performance Measure	Time Frame
<b>Action 1.1. Develop and implement a comprehensive asset management and maintenance system with sufficient funding to improve the quality of user experiences in Oklahoma City parks.</b>						
1.1.1. Maintain an inventory of all park assets (facilities, infrastructure, and grounds), including condition, deferred maintenance needs, and life cycle replacement schedules.	Task	Parks and Recreation Department	"Friends of OKC Parks" organization(s)	Maintenance enhancement fund (field and shelter fees, golf fees, etc.), sponsorships, advertising, donations	All park assets and their condition inventoried.	Short term (0–5 years)
1.1.2. Establish maintenance standards for park assets (facilities, infrastructure, and grounds) tied to quality outcomes. Target a minimum of Mode II maintenance using NRPA's standards.	Task	Parks and Recreation Department				
1.1.3. Prioritize and implement physical investments in existing park assets to implement the standards and address deferred maintenance and life cycle replacement.	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department				
1.1.4. Update existing facility and grounds maintenance procedures to support the system.	Task	Parks and Recreation Department				
1.1.5. Increase current funding to sufficient levels to implement the system.	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department				
<b>Action 1.2. Determine additional areas in the system where mowing can be substantially reduced or eliminated to reduce cost and create a more balanced system of natural and maintained areas.</b>						
1.2.1. Establish criteria to identify natural areas (e.g., public visibility, ecological restoration value, etc.).	Task	Parks and Recreation Department	Multiple environmental and conservation organizations by way of newsletters, conferences, hikes, lectures, etc. Native plant societies	Maintenance enhancement fund	Keep the balance of maintained vs. natural areas at or below the best practice of 60%/40% over time.	Short term (0–5 years)
1.2.2. Amend the weed ordinance to allow natural areas to be maintained in Oklahoma City parks.	Regulation	Planning Department				
1.2.3. Incorporate natural area management zones and practices into the maintenance plans for each park.	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department				
1.2.4. Undertake public outreach/education on the value of natural areas in city parks.	Partnership	Parks and Recreation Department				
<b>Action 1.3. Develop and implement design standards to improve the attractiveness of and enhance user experiences in community-serving parks.</b>						
1.3.1. Structure the design standards to address the desired facilities and amenities for each park type (see Chapter 4), with the overall goal of providing a range of quality experiences to draw different age groups to use the park.	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Department				Short term (0–5 years)
1.3.2. Address the following in the design standards: facility design (e.g., materials); access, circulation, and parking to support different levels of facilities and amenities; landscaping, including tree planting and maintenance per Action 1.4; and signage, safety and security, lighting, costs, environmental sustainability, etc.	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Department				
1.3.3. Apply the design standards to all physical improvement projects in the parks.	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Department				

Strategic Direction 1: Maintain and improve physical assets of existing parks.						
Action Steps	Method	Responsible Parties	Potential Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Performance Measure	Time Frame
<b>Action 1.4. Implement a tree planting and replacement program in the Oklahoma City parks.</b>						
1.4.1. Develop a GIS inventory of existing trees in the parks (species, size, condition, canopy coverage).	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department	Tree promotion organization (e.g., OKC Arbor Day Foundation)	Insurance monies received from cars damaging city trees, developer fees/tree fund	All trees inventoried. Trees canopy target reached.	Long term (0–20 years)
1.4.2. Establish a tree canopy coverage target, preferred species, and criteria for priority tree planting locations (e.g., in picnic areas and along walking trails).	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department				
1.4.3. Allocate funding in the annual parks budget for tree planting and replacement. Include adequate funding for maintenance.	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department, City Management				
1.4.4. Support greenokc’s direction to establish an Urban Forestry Program and City Urban Forester position.	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Department				
1.4.5. Coordinate tree planting with city-wide efforts (e.g., the releafokc program).	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Department				
<b>Action 1.5. Identify and dispose of unproductive parks to allow resources to be invested in more productive parks that better serve community needs.</b>						
1.5.1. Use the criteria defined in Chapter 6 to identify and dispose of surplus parks.	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department				Short term (0–5 years)
1.5.2. Improve processes for disposal of parkland identified as surplus.	Task	Parks and Recreation Department				
<b>Action 1.6. Evaluate the current park maintenance districts for opportunities to increase efficiency and reduce costs.</b>						
1.6.1. Undertake a drive time analysis to determine the time maintenance staff spends driving during a typical day.	Task	Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Department		Efficiencies gained, outsourcing	Drive time for maintenance staff reduced.	Medium term (0–10 years)
1.6.2. Redesign the existing (five) park maintenance districts to limit the amount of drive time (ideally to no more than an hour and a half daily) to increase productivity and reduce the cost of maintenance and associated expenses such as fuel. Conduct a cost-benefit analysis to compare gains to costs such as increased supervision, new maintenance facility requirements, etc. prior to finalizing a recommendation for revised or new districts.	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department				

Strategic Direction 2: Develop facilities and programs in existing parks to meet community needs.						
Action Steps	Method	Responsible Parties	Potential Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Performance Measure	Time Frame
<b>Action 2.1. Implement a program to improve existing park assets to align with community recreational facility needs.</b>						
2.1.1. Evaluate each park for its contribution to community needs using the park classification and evaluation considerations contained in Chapter 6.	Task	Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Department	"Friends of OKC Parks" organization(s)	Maintenance enhancement fund (field and shelter fees, golf fees, etc.), sponsorships, advertising, donations	All park assets and their condition inventoried.	Short term (0–5 years)
2.1.2. Using the evaluation conducted per 2.1.1, prioritize deficient parks for improvements (upgrades to existing facilities, development of new ones, etc.) to meet community needs.	Task	Parks and Recreation Department				
2.1.3. Develop and regularly update park master plans to define the improvements to be made to priority parks. Engage surrounding residents in the planning process to address the local neighborhood context, demographics, needs, and priorities. Remove or replace unproductive facilities or amenities.	Task	Parks and Recreation Department				
2.1.4. Establish long-range maintenance plans for park improvements consistent with the asset management and maintenance system (Action 1.1). Allocate funding to support improvements and long-term maintenance.	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department				
<b>Action 2.2. Develop a plan for recreational programs and services to be offered in Oklahoma City parks to meet community needs.</b>						
2.2.1. Identify core programs and services that should be offered by the Parks and Recreation Department, focusing on health and wellness as the key element. Identify non-core programs that can be offered by other providers.	Task	Parks and Recreation Department	School Districts, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, YWCA, other recreational providers	Pricing policy, partnerships	Increase to 85% from 71% the percentage of residents rating the quality of programs good or excellent.	Medium term (0–10 years)
2.2.2. Evaluate, strengthen, and expand existing offerings by the Parks and Recreation Department consistent with the definition of core programs and services. Incorporate facilities to support these programs and services into park improvement plans.	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department				
2.2.3. Establish partnership agreements that maximize the extent to which recreational programs and services offered by other providers in Oklahoma City parks meet needs of the overall community (as opposed to specific interest groups).	Partnership	Parks and Recreation Department, Oklahoma City Community Foundation				
2.2.4. Explore joint programming opportunities with school districts within Oklahoma City.	Partnership	Parks and Recreation Department, Oklahoma City Community Foundation, Oklahoma City Public Schools				



Strategic Direction 2: Develop facilities and programs in existing parks to meet community needs.						
Action Steps	Method	Responsible Parties	Potential Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Performance Measure	Time Frame
<b>Action 2.3. Implement a model of larger, multi-generational centers located in regional (district or metropolitan) parks to replace the current outdated model of smaller recreation centers in community parks.</b>						
2.3.1. Identify the programs and uses to be accommodated in multi-generational centers based on the needs analysis. Such centers should incorporate the components of aquatic centers, senior wellness centers, and community/ health and fitness centers into one facility.	Task, Program		City/County Health Department, YMCA, YWCA	Bonds, facility authority, lease backs, user fees or other form of cost recovery to support operations and maintenance	Eight multi-generational centers built in 20 years.	Long term (0–20 years)
2.3.2. Identify locations for multi-generational centers based on the level of service standards. Where feasible, expand/ upgrade existing facilities (e.g., regional aquatic centers). Develop plans, allocate funding, and incorporate the identified centers into the city’s Capital Improvements Program. Dedicate funding to support long-term maintenance.	Task, Program					
<b>Action 2.4. Enhance the value of the Oklahoma City parks as places for the community to come together at scales ranging from neighborhood gatherings to large-scale festivals and special events.</b>						
2.4.1. Designate areas for informal gatherings in local (neighborhood and community) parks.	Task	Parks and Recreation Department, Oklahoma City Community Foundation		Sponsorships, cost recovery from events	Host 5 new annual signature events.	Medium term (0–10 years)
2.4.2. Incorporate larger special event areas with sufficient support facilities (access, parking, etc.) into regional (district and metropolitan) parks.	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department, Oklahoma City Community Foundation				
2.4.3. Evaluate the effectiveness of existing special events offered in Oklahoma City parks. Identify five or more existing or new signature events that can be leveraged for regional economic impact and bring recognition to the park system (see Action 5.2).	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department, Oklahoma City Community Foundation				
<b>Action 2.5. Increase the attractiveness of Oklahoma City parks for young adult professionals as an economic development and community-building strategy.</b>						
2.5.1. Conduct surveys and focus groups to determine the recreational opportunities young professionals seek in a park system, with the goal of increasing the city’s competitiveness with other regions in attracting and retaining talented young workers and the businesses that depend upon them.	Task	Parks and Recreation Department	Chamber of Commerce	Foundation, economic development agency funding		Short term (0–5 years)
2.5.2. Based on the survey and focus group results, incorporate selected facilities and programs appealing to young adult professionals into regional or community parks.	Program	Parks and Recreation Department				
2.5.3. Work with the Chamber of Commerce to market the economic value of parks as a way to attract talented young workers and businesses to the city (Action 4.2).	Program	Parks and Recreation Department				

Strategic Direction 3: Improve access to existing parks.						
Action Steps	Method	Responsible Parties	Potential Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Performance Measure	Time Frame
<b>Action 3.1. Implement a program to better connect neighborhoods to existing parks via the sidewalk network.</b>						
3.1.1. Use the park access maps in Chapter 6 to Identify sidewalk gaps, deficient conditions, and other access barriers within a ½- to 1-mile “walkshed” of each existing park. Prioritize existing and potential street/sidewalk connections for improvement.	Task, Program	Planning Department		Dedicated sales tax, bonds, boulevard fee	All streets in the central city not meeting local park level of service standards retrofitted with sidewalks.	Medium term (0–10 years)
3.1.2. Evaluate current park access points as they relate to the existing and potential street/sidewalk connections. Prioritize improvements to existing and development of new access points to create welcoming park entrances (signage, landscaping, etc.). Develop design standards for these entrances (Action 1.3).	Task, Program	Planning Department				
3.1.3. Prioritize street tree planting along streets leading to parks.	Policy	Planning Department, Public Works Department				
3.1.4. Allocate funding for priority park access (sidewalk and entrance) improvements, targeting retrofits in the central city and urban area to improve community health and promote economic revitalization.	Policy	Planning Department, Public Works Department, Parks and Recreation Department				
<b>Action 3.2. Connect parks to the citywide trail system.</b>						
3.2.1. Prioritize segments of the City’s trails master plan (Action 5.1) connecting to existing parks for implementation, including “street-trails” to create connections to larger parks.	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Department		Dedicated sales tax, bonds, greenway foundation, land lease/concessions, special recognition license tag		Long term (0–20 years)
<b>Action 3.3. Enhance city design standards to promote connectivity.</b>						
3.3.1. Implement the pedestrian and bicycle requirements of <i>planokc</i> ’s proposed street design standards to improve the pedestrian and bicycle environment, including sidewalks, multi-use paths, and bicycle lanes. Add requirements for street trees along both sides of all new or reconstructed streets.	Policy	Planning Department, Public Works Department				Short term (0–5 years)
3.3.2. Adopt a new “street-trail” classification (separated paths wide enough to accommodate both pedestrians and bicycles along boulevards and other streets designated in the City’s trails master plan).	Policy	Planning Department, Parks and Recreation Department				

Strategic Direction 4: Promote and increase awareness of the value of parks.						
Action Steps	Method	Responsible Parties	Potential Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Performance Measure	Time Frame
<b>Action 4.1. Increase the marketing and business development capabilities of the Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Department.</b>						
4.1.1. Develop a distinctive “brand” for Oklahoma City parks within the overall city brand.	Task	Parks and Recreation Department	Universities (marketing or business department), Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, YWCA	Parks foundation, user fees (permits, rentals, programs, etc.)	Business Development Office generates 10 times its cost in revenue.	Short term (0–5 years)
4.1.2. Increase the marketing resources of the Parks and Recreation Department, and implement a plan to strengthen communication and outreach efforts on the value of parks (website, social media, etc.) using the brand.	Policy	City Management				
4.1.3. Ensure that partners who are operating programs and facilities in Oklahoma City parks provide recognition for the park system (partnership agreements, signage, brochures, etc.).	Policy	Oklahoma City Community Foundation				
4.1.4. Establish a business development office to develop earned income opportunities and other diversified revenue options available to help offset operational and capital costs and to oversee development of business plans for major facilities and events.	Program	Parks and Recreation Department				
<b>Action 4.2. Initiate a broader, community-wide campaign to increase awareness of the value parks bring to Oklahoma City’s quality of life and economy.</b>						
4.2.1. Conduct a study of the economic impact of Oklahoma City parks.	Task	Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Department, Oklahoma City Community Foundation	TPL’s Center for City Parks Excellence, Chamber of Commerce, City-County Health Department, healthcare institutions, School Districts, Neighborhood Alliance	Foundation, economic development agency funding		Short term (0–5 years)
4.2.2. Establish a “Parks Alliance” based on the Neighborhood Alliance model, with funding to focus on marketing the value of parks citywide as a key priority (see Chapter 10).	Program	Oklahoma City Community Foundation				
4.2.3. Develop and implement a coordinated marketing campaign to promote the value of Oklahoma City parks. Engage other partners (Chamber of Commerce, City-County Health Department, healthcare institutions, Oklahoma City Schools, Neighborhood Alliance, etc.) and media outlets in this effort.	Program	Oklahoma City Community Foundation				

Strategic Direction 5: Develop new parks and facilities.						
Action Steps	Method	Responsible Parties	Potential Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Performance Measure	Time Frame
<b>Action 5.1. Complete the citywide trails system.</b>						
5.1.1. Using the trail access and connectivity maps in Chapter 6 as a guide, update the trails master plan and prioritize key segments for implementation.	Task	Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Department	City-County Health Department, healthcare institutions, (hospitals, medical clinic, insurance company, etc.), biking/ walking organizations	Dedicated sales tax, developer dedications, bonds, greenway foundation, land lease/ concessions, special recognition license tag	One hundred miles of trail complete in 20 years.	Long term (0–20 years)
5.1.2. Identify “street-trail” connections along key streets and boulevards to increase connectivity and fill gaps in the system.	Task	Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Department				
5.1.3. Require new developments to reserve trail segments designated on the trails master plan.	Regulation	Planning Department				
5.1.4. Incorporate “healthy heart trail” or similar health and wellness features into the trails system (signage, distance markers, etc.).	Program	Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Department				
5.1.5. Develop greenway corridors around trails, where rights-of-way allow, with trees, benches, possible concessions, and other amenities.	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department, Public Works Department, Planning Department				
<b>Action 5.2. Develop a signature downtown (Core to Shore) park system to leverage economic development and quality of life.</b>						
5.2.1. Implement the Core to Shore Plan connecting the downtown core to the Oklahoma River, beginning with Central Park. Identify a sustainable funding stream to support park operations and the highest standards of maintenance (Mode I per NRPA’s maintenance standards).	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Department	Mayor’s office, Governor’s office, convention and visitor’s bureau, chamber of commerce, leading media outlets	Business Improvement District, special event revenues, sponsors, naming rights		Medium term (0–10 years)
5.2.2. Incorporate regionally significant, large-scale events into downtown park programming (see Action 2.4).	Program	Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Department				
5.2.3. Incorporate recreational facilities and amenities for downtown residents.	Program	Parks and Recreation Department				
<b>Action 5.3. Develop new local (neighborhood or community) parks where necessary to serve existing residents and regional (district or metropolitan) parks where necessary to serve residents of developing parts of the city (urban or urban growth area).</b>						
5.3.1. Conduct site selection analyses in areas where the level of service standards indicate future local and regional parks will be needed. Incorporate land acquisition and park development into long-term capital improvement plans.	Policy	Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Department		Park impact/ land dedication fees, bonds	Five new regional parks and 25 new local parks developed in the central city and urban area.	Long term (0–20 years)
5.3.2. Allocate funding to support development of the new parks when needed to serve residents of developing areas. Consider enactment of a park impact fee proportional to the demand for regional recreation generated by new developments.	Policy	City Management				

Strategic Direction 5: Develop new parks and facilities.						
Action Steps	Method	Responsible Parties	Potential Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Performance Measure	Time Frame
Action 5.4. Develop partnerships to develop and manage new facilities.						
5.4.1. Engage potential partners (e.g., health care providers, YMCA, corporate sponsors) in developing concepts for significant new facilities (e.g., multi-generational centers/ senior wellness centers) based on needs assessments.	Partnership	Oklahoma City Community Foundation	Health care institutions, YMCA/YWCA, corporations	Partnerships, sponsorships		Short term (0–5 years)
5.4.2. Develop agreements on programs and processes for operating and managing facilities that give proper recognition to Oklahoma City parks.	Partnership, Program	Parks and Recreation Department, Oklahoma City Community Foundation				

Strategic Direction 6: Establish agreements and standards for private parks and school parks.						
Action Steps	Method	Responsible Parties	Potential Partners	Potential Funding Sources	Performance Measure	Time Frame
<b>Action 6.1. Develop a coordinated school/park system strategy providing for appropriate use and sharing of facilities for recreational purposes.</b>						
6.1.1. Establish standards and agreements for use of school grounds as school parks, prioritizing areas not meeting the level of service standard for access to public parks. Address safety and liability issues.	Policy, Partnership	Parks and Recreation Department, Oklahoma City Community Foundation, Oklahoma City Public Schools Planning Department	"Friends of OKC Parks" organization(s)	Bonds, donations, benefit districts, user fees or other form of cost recovery to support operations and maintenance	Agreement in place to use Oklahoma City Schools as school parks.	Short term (0-5 years)
6.1.2. Develop standards and agreements for joint development of recreational facilities in the construction of new schools or significant upgrades to existing ones.	Policy, Partnership	Parks and Recreation Department, Oklahoma City Community Foundation, Oklahoma City Public Schools Planning Department				
6.1.3. Begin discussions on the above with the Oklahoma City School District. Extend to school districts located elsewhere in the urban area and the urban growth area over time.	Policy, Partnership	Parks and Recreation Department, Oklahoma City Community Foundation, Oklahoma City Public Schools Planning Department				
<b>Action 6.2. Meet the local recreational needs of new residents in developing areas through private parks.</b>						
6.2.1. Establish design standards for private parks in new developments (size, walking distance for residents, minimum uses to be provided, long-term maintenance, etc.).	Regulation	Planning Department	School Districts, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, YWCA, other recreational providers	Pricing policy, partnerships		Short term (0-5 years)
6.2.2. Incorporate the design standards into a parkland dedication ordinance or other regulations to ensure that the private parks serve the recreational needs of residents.	Regulation	Planning Department				

## D. NRPA MAINTENANCE STANDARDS

### MODE I

State of the art maintenance applied to a high quality diverse landscape. Usually associated with high traffic urban areas such as public squares, malls, governmental grounds or high visitation parks.

#### Turf Care

Grass height maintained according to species and variety of grass. Mowed at least once every five working days but may be as often as once every three working days. Aeration as required, not less than four times per year. Reseeding or sodding as needed. Weed control should be practiced so that no more than one percent of the surface has weeds present.

#### Fertilizer

Adequate fertilization applied to plant species according to their optimum requirements. Application rates and times should ensure an even supply of nutrients for the entire year. Nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium percentages should follow local recommendations from your County Extension Service. Trees, shrubs and flowers should be fertilized according to their individual requirements of nutrients for optimum growth. Unusually long or short growing seasons may modify the chart slightly.

#### Irrigation

Sprinkler irrigated. Electric automatic commonly used. Some manual systems could be considered adequate under plentiful rainfall circumstances and adequate staffing. Frequency of use follows rainfall, temperature, seasonal length and demands of plant material.

#### Litter Control

Minimum of once per day, 7 days per week. Extremely high visitation may increase the frequency. Receptacles should be plentiful enough to hold all trash generated between servicing without normally overflowing.

#### Pruning

Frequency dictated primarily by species and variety of trees and shrubs. Length of growing season and design concept also a controlling factor as are clipped hedges versus natural style. Timing usually scheduled to coincide with low demand periods or to take advantage of special growing characteristics such as low demand periods or to take advantage of special growing characteristics such as pruning after flowering.

#### Disease and Insect Control

Control program may use any of three philosophies: 1) Preventative; a scheduled chemical or cultural program designed to prevent significant damage. 2) Corrective; application of chemical or

mechanical controls designed to eliminate observed problems. 3) Integrated pest management; withholding any controls until such time as pests demonstrate damage to plant materials or become a demonstrated irritant in the case of flies, mosquitoes, gnats, etc. At this maintenance level the controlling objective is to not have the public notice any problems. It is anticipated at Mode I that problems will either be prevented or observed at a very early stage and corrected immediately.

### Snow Removal

Snow removal starts the same day as accumulations of  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch are present. At no time will snow be permitted to cover transportation or parking surfaces longer than noon of the day after the snow stops. Applications of snow melting compound and/or gravel are appropriate to reduce the danger of injury due to falls.

### Lighting

Maintenance should preserve the original design. Damaged systems should be repaired as quickly as they are discovered. Bulb replacement should be done during the first working day after the outage is reported.

### Surfaces

Sweeping, cleaning and washing of surfaces needs to be done so that at no time does an accumulation of sand, dirt and leaves distract from the looks or safety of the area. Repainting or restaining of structures should occur when weather or wear deteriorate the appearance of the covering. Wood surfaces requiring oiling should be done a minimum of four times per year. Stains to surfaces should be taken off within five working days. Graffiti should be washed off or painted over the next working day after application.

### Repairs

Repairs to all elements of the design should be done immediately upon discovery provided replacement parts and technicians are available to accomplish the job. When disruption to the public might be major and the repair not critical, repairs may be postponed to a time period which is least disruptive.

### Inspection

Inspections of this area should be done daily by a member of staff.

### Floral Plantings

Normally extensive or unusual floral plantings are part of the design. These may include ground level beds, planters or hanging baskets. Often multiple plantings are scheduled, usually at least two blooming cycles per year. Some designs may call for a more frequent rotation of bloom. Maximum care of watering, fertilizing, disease control, disbudding and weeding is necessary. Weeding flowers and shrubs is done a minimum of once per week. The desired standard is essentially weed free.

### Rest Rooms

Not always a part of the design but where required will normally receive no less than once per day servicing. Especially high traffic areas may require multiple servicing or a person assigned as attendant.

### Special Features

Features such as fountains, drinking fountains, sculpture, speaker systems, structural art, flag poles or parking and crowd control devices may be part of the integral design. Maintenance requirements can vary drastically but for this mode it should be of the highest possible order.

## MODE II

High level maintenance—associated with well developed park areas with reasonably high visitation.

### Turf Care

Grass cut once every five working days. Aeration as required but not less than two times per year. Reseeding or sodding when bare spots are present. Weed control practiced when weeds present visible problem or when weeds represent 5 percent of the turf surface. Some pre-emergent products may be utilized at this level.



## Fertilizer

Adequate fertilizer level to ensure that all plant materials are healthy and growing vigorously. Amounts depend on species, length of growing season, soils and rainfall. Rates should correspond to the lowest recommended rates shown on the chart on page 14. Distribution should ensure an even supply of nutrients for the entire year. Nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium percentage should follow local recommendations from the County Extension Service. Trees, shrubs and flowers should receive fertilizer levels to ensure optimum growth.

## Irrigation

Some type of irrigation system available. Frequency of use follows rainfall, temperature, seasonal length, and demands of plant material.

## Litter Control

Minimum of once per day, five days a week. Off-site movement of trash dependent on size of containers and use by the public. High use may dictate once per day cleaning or more. Containers are serviced.

## Pruning

Usually done at least once per season unless species planted dictate more frequent attention. Sculptured hedges or high growth species may dictate a more frequent requirement than most trees and shrubs in natural growth style plantings.

## Diseases and Disease Control

Usually done when disease or insects are inflicting noticeable damage, reducing vigor of plant materials or could be considered a bother to the public. Some preventative measures may be utilized such as systemic chemical treatments. Cultural prevention of disease problems can reduce time spent in this category. Some minor problems may be tolerated at this level.

## Snow Removal

Snow removed by noon the day following snowfall. Gravel or snow melt may be utilized to reduce ice accumulation.

## Lighting

Replacement or repair of fixtures when observed or reported as not working.

## Surfaces

Should be cleaned, repaired, repainted or replaced when appearance has noticeably deteriorated.

## Repairs

Should be done whenever safety, function, or bad appearance is in question.

## Inspection

Inspection by some staff member at least once a day when regular staff is scheduled.

## Floral Planting

Some sort of floral plantings present. Normally no more complex than two rotations of bloom per year. Care cycle usually at least once per week except watering may be more frequent. Health and vigor dictate cycle of fertilization and disease control. Beds essentially kept weed free.

## Rest Rooms

When present should be maintained at least once per day as long as they are open to public use. High use may dictate two servicings or more per day. Servicing period should ensure an adequate supply of paper and that rest rooms are reasonably clean and free from bad odors.

## Special Features

Should be maintained for safety, function and high quality appearance as per established design.

## MODE III

Moderate level maintenance—associated with locations with moderate to low levels of development, moderate to low levels of visitation or with agencies that because of budget restrictions can't afford a higher intensity of maintenance.

### Turf Care

Cut once every 10 working days. Normally not aerated unless turf quality indicates a need or in anticipation of an application of fertilizer. Reseeding or resodding done only when major bare spots appear. Weed control measures normally used when 50 percent of small areas is weed infested or general turf quality low in 15 percent or more of the surface area.

### Fertilizer

Applied only when turf vigor seems to be low. Low level application done on a once per year basis. Rate suggested is one-half the level recommended on page 14 for species and variety.

### Irrigation

Dependent on climate. Rainfall locations above 25 inches a year usually rely on natural rainfall with the possible addition of portable irrigation during periods of drought. Dry climates below 25 inches normally have some form of supplemental irrigation. When irrigation is automatic a demand schedule is programmed. Where manual servicing is required two to three times per week operation would be the norm.

### Litter Control

Minimum service of two to three times per week. High use may dictate higher levels during warm season.

### Pruning

When required for health or reasonable appearance. With most tree and shrub species this would not be more frequent than once every two or three years.

### Disease and Insect Control

Done only on epidemic or serious complaint basis. Control measures may be put into effect when the health or survival of the plant material is threatened or where public's comfort is concerned.

### Snow Removal

Snow removal done based on local law requirements but generally accomplished by the day following snowfall. Some crosswalks or surfaces may not be cleared at all.

### Lighting

Replacement or repair of fixtures when report filed or when noticed by employees.

### Surfaces

Cleaned on complaint basis. Repaired or replaced as budget allows.

### Repairs

Should be done whenever safety or function is in question.

### Inspections

Once per week.

### Floral Planting

Only perennials or flowering trees or shrubs.

### Rest Rooms

When present, serviced a minimum of 5 times per week. Seldom more than once each day.

### Special Features

Minimum allowable maintenance for features present with function and safety in mind.

## MODE IV

Moderately low level-usually associated with low level of development, low visitation, undeveloped areas or remote parks.

### Turf Care

Low frequency mowing schedule based on species. Low growing grasses may not be mowed. High grasses may receive periodic mowing to aid public use or reduce fire danger. Weed control limited to legal requirements of noxious weeds.

### Fertilizer

Not fertilized.

### Irrigation

No irrigation.

### Litter Control

Once per week or less. Complaint may increase level above one servicing.

### Pruning

No regular trimming. Safety or damage from weather may dictate actual work schedule.

### Disease and Insect Control

None except where epidemic and epidemic condition threatens resource or public.

### Snow Removal

None except where major access ways or active parking areas dictate the need for removal.

### Lighting

Replacement on complaint or employee discovery.

## Surfaces

Replaced or repaired when safety is a concern and when budget is available.

### Repairs

Should be done when safety or function is in question.

### Inspections

Once per month.

### Floral Plantings

None, may have wildflowers, perennials, flowering trees or shrubs in place.

### Rest Rooms

When present, five times per week.

### Special Features

Minimum maintenance to allow safe use.

## MODE V

High visitation natural areas-usually associated with large urban or regional parks. Size and user frequency may dictate resident maintenance staff. Road, pathway or trail systems relatively well developed. Other facilities at strategic locations such as entries, trail heads, building complexes and parking lots.

### Turf Care

Normally not mowed but grassed parking lots, approaches to buildings or road shoulders, may be cut to reduce fire danger. Weed control on noxious weeds.

### Fertilizer

None.

### Irrigation

None.

### Litter Control

Based on visitation, may be more than once per day if crowds dictate that level.

### Pruning

Only done for safety.

### Insect and Disease Control

Done only to ensure safety or when problem seriously discourages public use.

### Snow Removal

One day service on roads and parking areas.

### Lighting

Replaced on complaint or when noticed by employees.

### Surfaces

Cleaned on complaint. Repaired or replaced when budget will permit.

### Repairs

Done when safety or function impaired. Should have same year service on poor appearance.

### Inspection

Once per day when staff is available.

### Floral Planting

None introduced except at special locations such as interpretive buildings, headquarters, etc. Once per week service on these designs. Flowering trees and shrubs, wildflowers present but demand no regular maintenance.

### Rest Rooms

Frequency geared to visitor level. Once a day is the common routine but for some locations and reasons frequency may be more often.

### Special Features

Repaired whenever safety or function are a concern. Appearance corrected in the current budget year.

## MODE VI

Minimum maintenance level-low visitation natural area or large urban parks that are undeveloped.

### Turf Areas

Not mowed. Weed control only if legal requirements demand it.

### Fertilizer

Not fertilized.

### Irrigation

No irrigation.

### Litter Control

On demand or complaint basis.

### Pruning

No pruning unless safety is involved.

### Disease Insect Control

No control except in epidemic or safety situations.

### Snow Removal

Snow removal only on strategic roads and parking lots. Accomplished within two days after snow stops.

### Lighting

Replacement on complaint basis.

### Surfaces

Serviced when safety is consideration.

### Repairs

Should be done when safety or function is in question.

### Inspection

Once per month.

### Floral Plantings

None.

### Rest Rooms

Service based on need.

### Special Features

Service based on lowest acceptable frequency for feature. Safety and function interruption a concern when either seem significant.

