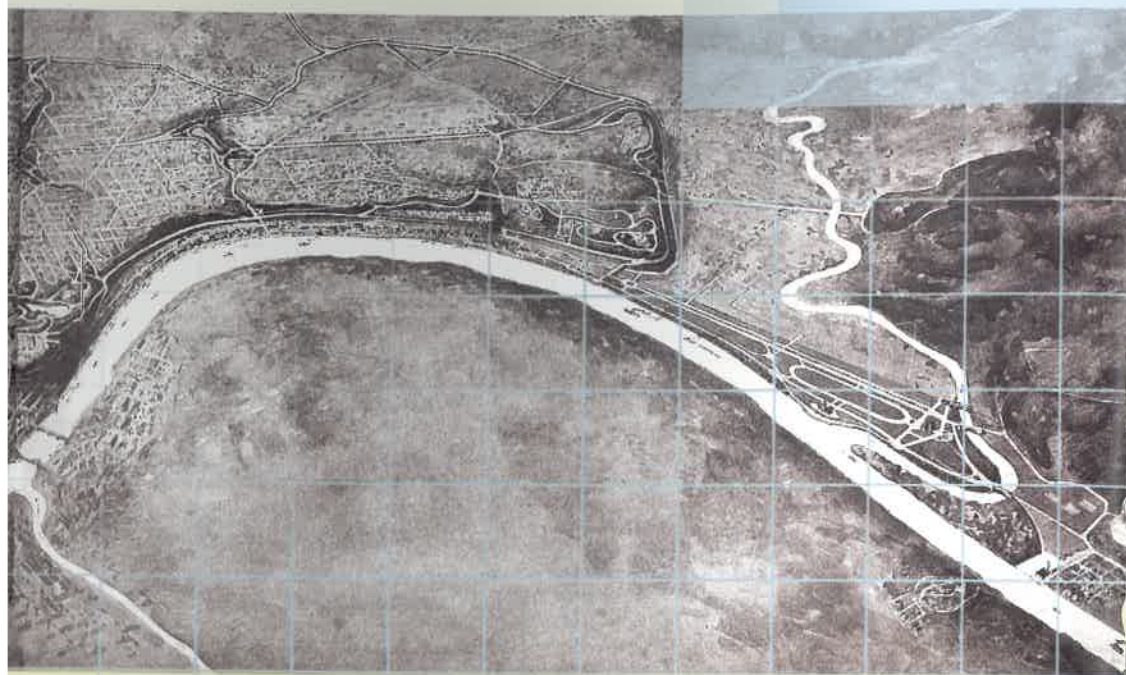


reconnect, restore & reinvest in our parks



2007



*cincinnati parks*

# CENTENNIAL MASTER PLAN

© 2007 Cincinnati Park Board

*Printed on acid free, 50% recycled paper (25% post-consumer content) using archival inks.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Board of Park Commissioners

Marian J. Lindberg President  
Roscoe A. Fultz Vice President  
Merri Gaither Smith  
Otto M. Budig Jr.  
Robert D.H. Anning  
Francis P. Russell Former Member

### Park Board Staff

Willie F. Carden, Jr. *Director*  
Marijane Klug *Finance Administrator*  
Steve Schuckman *Superintendent  
of Planning & Design—Project Manager*  
Gerald Checco *Superintendent  
of Operations & Land Management*

### Cincinnati Parks Foundation

#### *Executive Committee*

Ty Easley President  
Patrick J. Ward Vice President  
Lois Conyers Secretary  
Valerie Newell Treasurer  
Judy S. Dalambakis  
John E. Neyer  
Paul G. Sittenfeld

John Anning  
Susan S. Anthony  
Kristine H. Barr  
Richard L. Betagole  
Neil K. Bortz  
Susan F. Castellini  
Phillip J. Castellini  
Philip K. Cone

Minette Cooper  
Grant S. Cowan  
Cathy T. Crain  
Amelia S. Crutcher  
Andrew E. DeWitt  
Eric L. Emerson  
Sharon Williams Frisbie  
Dean Gregory  
J. Joseph Hale, Jr.  
Renee Mahaffey Harris  
Helen K. Heekin  
Susan Hickenlooper  
Marty Humes  
Ron Joseph, Jr.  
Stanley M. Kaplan, M.D.  
David R. Lofland, Jr.  
Kevin N. McMurray  
Carter McNabb  
Marjorie Motch Past President  
Debra C. Oliver  
Sean T. Parker  
John A. Parlin III, M.D.  
Robert J. Petrik  
C. Brewster Rhoads  
Robert Richardson  
Ryan Rybolt  
Thomas R. Schiff  
Elizabeth A. Stone  
William F. Thiemann  
Lynda A. Thomas  
Marsha Thornton  
Darren Tolliver  
Dick Williams  
Alex C. Young  
Anne M. Zaring

### Advisory Committee

Ron Kull *UC Architect*  
Tony Brown *Uptown Consortium*  
Robert Fitzpatrick *Wilson Commons Adv.*  
Mary Margaret Rochford  
*Cincinnati Horticulture Society*  
Melody Sawyer *Richardson Arts*  
Morton Libby *Business & Marketing*  
Lydia Morgan *Community Representative*  
Murray Sinclair *Business & Finance*  
Jack Rouse *Business & Port Authority*  
Len Thomas *UC Landscape Architect*  
Myrtis Powell *Community Representative*  
Jinny Berten *Community Representative*  
Ann Zaring *Parks Foundation*  
Tim Burke *Attorney*  
Lee Carter *Finance*  
Heidi Jark *Fifth Third Foundation*  
Jeff Weedman *P&G*



### Consultant Team

Christopher Manning  
*Human Nature, Inc. Principal*

Nicole DiNovo  
*Human Nature, Inc. Project Manager*

Jess Parrett *Leisure Services Management*

Kelly Kolar *Kolar Design*

Catherine Cappel *C.A. Cappel Associates*

### Steering Committee

Mary Jo Bazeley *Rapid Run Advisory Council*

Peter Brumm *Ault Park Advisory Council*

Caryl Fullman *Urban Forestry Board*

Brenda Grier *Friends of Fleischmann Park*

Skip Hickenlooper *Business & Finance*

Jim King *Walnut Hills & Arts Advisory Panel*

Cathy Moon *Friends of Krohn & Parks*

Tom Neyer, Jr. *Developer*

Brewster Rhoads *Parks Foundation*

Virginia Russell *UC Landscape Architect*

Donald Spencer *Friends of Krohn & Parks*

Beth Sullebarger *Historic Preservation*

Stephanie Sunderland *Neighborhood Representative*

Eric Russo *Hillside Trust*

### Special Thanks

Special thanks to all of the *Park Board Staff*, *Volunteers*, and *Citizens of Cincinnati* who have attended meetings, answered questionnaires, and provided input. Your passion, knowledge, and ideas have helped make this plan better! Additionally, thank you to the students and faculty of the 2007 *Graphic Design Class* at the *University of Cincinnati, College of Design, Art, Architecture & Planning*, for creating the design concept and graphic framework, and taking many of the photographs for the Centennial Master Plan.



## LETTERS

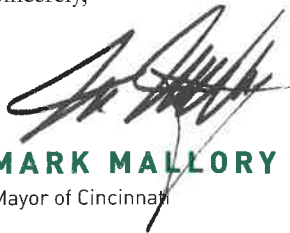
### *Citizens of Cincinnati:*

It is with great enthusiasm and hope for the future that I endorse and support the Centennial Master Plan for Cincinnati Parks. Our city is graced with many assets, and our beautiful park system is certainly one of our greatest achievements. Our parks contribute to our quality of life, vibrant economy, sense of place, social fabric, and environmental health.

Parks play an important role in furthering City priorities and policy. Parks contribute to neighborhood investment, since they help make for a livable community. Parks encourage economic development and are a catalyst for new investment all over the city. Cincinnati Parks provides a service of excellence, by providing our citizens one of the top park systems in the country. Cincinnati Parks contribute directly to Public Safety, not only as safe havens with low crime rates, but also as places that make us feel good about our community and ourselves.

This new master plan continues the history of innovative planning for Cincinnati Parks—and will help guide us on to an even brighter, green future.

Sincerely,

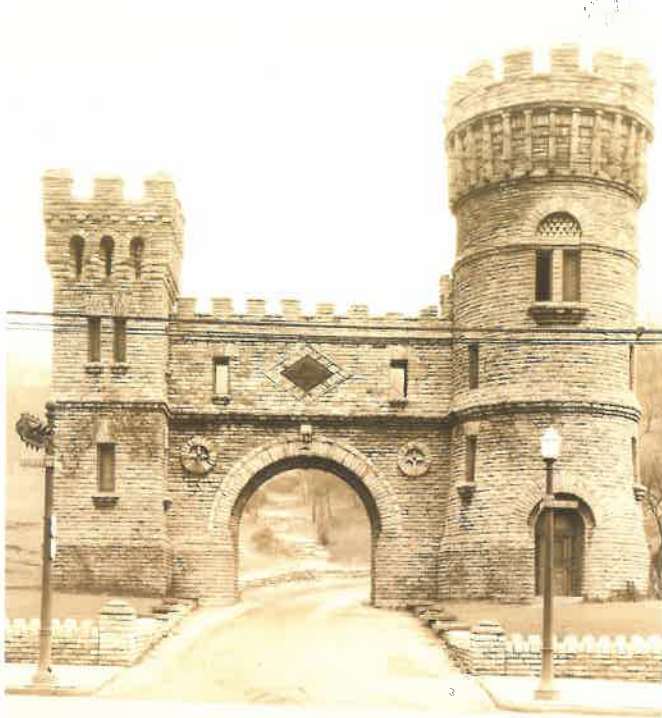


**MARK MALLORY**

Mayor of Cincinnati



A couple walks through Theodore M. Berry International Friendship Park.



*I am very pleased to present the Cincinnati Parks Centennial Master Plan as our vision for the future of Cincinnati Parks.*

*Through in-depth study, exploration, discussion, and input from people all over the community, we have crafted a plan that builds upon the distinguished past, faces the challenges of the present, and projects a future of even greater achievements for our parks and our city.*

*Sincerely,*

*Marian J. Lindberg*

**MARIAN J. LINDBERG**

President, Board of Park Commissioners

*I am pleased to present the Cincinnati Parks Centennial Master Plan by the Cincinnati Park Board.*

*Historically, Cincinnati Parks have helped shape the development of our city. Parks that are well distributed, accessible to all of our citizens, and which are part of a network of greenspaces are key dimensions to a healthy and viable community.*

*This latest Master Plan builds upon the excellence of the 1907 Kessler Plan and the momentum of the 1992 Park Master Plan. Most important, however, it provides a road map for the future of Cincinnati Parks in the 21st century, so that we can continue to provide for the needs and aspirations of those who live, work and visit here.*

*Sincerely,*

**WILLIE F. CARDEN, JR.**

Director, Cincinnati Park Board and Parks Foundation



# 1

## THE CENTENNIAL PLAN

### AN OVERVIEW

- 11 INTRODUCTION
- 12 THE VISION—A Network of Green
- 14 THE FRAMEWORK  
*Mission, Policies & Service Delivery Guidelines*
- 16 PLAN SUMMARY
  - 16 *Objectives*
  - 16 *Methodology*
  - 17 *Key Recommendations*
  - 20 *Key Strategies*

# 2

## GROWING THE PLAN

### THE BACKGROUND

- 24 WHY A NEW PLAN & HOW TO GET THERE
- 26 THE CONTEXT: CHALLENGES, TRENDS, & ISSUES
- 29 REVISITING THE PAST
- 41 COMMUNITY INPUT FOR THE CENTENNIAL PLAN
- 46 RESEARCH FINDINGS
  - 48 *Related Plans & Initiatives*
  - 51 *Demographic Findings*
  - 52 *Assessment of Current System*
  - 54 *Benchmarking Park Funding Nationally*
  - 57 *Initiatives of Other Cities in the Region*
  - 59 *National Research Findings*

# 3

## REALIZING THE VISION

### STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

- 66 KEY INITIATIVES
- 84 FUNDING
- 94 ORGANIZATION & STAFFING
- 103 OPERATIONS & NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
- 114 PROGRAMS & SERVICES
  - 116 *Concerts, Programs & Events*
  - 117 *Sponsorships*
  - 118 *Krohn Conservatory*
  - 120 *Program & Event Expansion*
  - 121 *Nature Education*
  - 123 *Rentals & Services*

# 4

## REINVESTING IN PARKS

### CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- 126 CAPITAL INVESTMENT APPROACH
- 129 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY
  - 129 *The Urban Core*
  - 143 *Regional Parks & Neighborhood Parks*
  - 154 *Preserves & Community Greenspace*
  - 156 *New and Expanded Parks*
  - 157 *Acquisition & Divestment*
  - 161 *A Green Network*
    - *Parkways/ Boulevards*
    - *Natural Systems & Greenways*
  - 168 *Capital Improvement Budget*

# 5

## MAKING IT HAPPEN

### IMPLEMENTATION

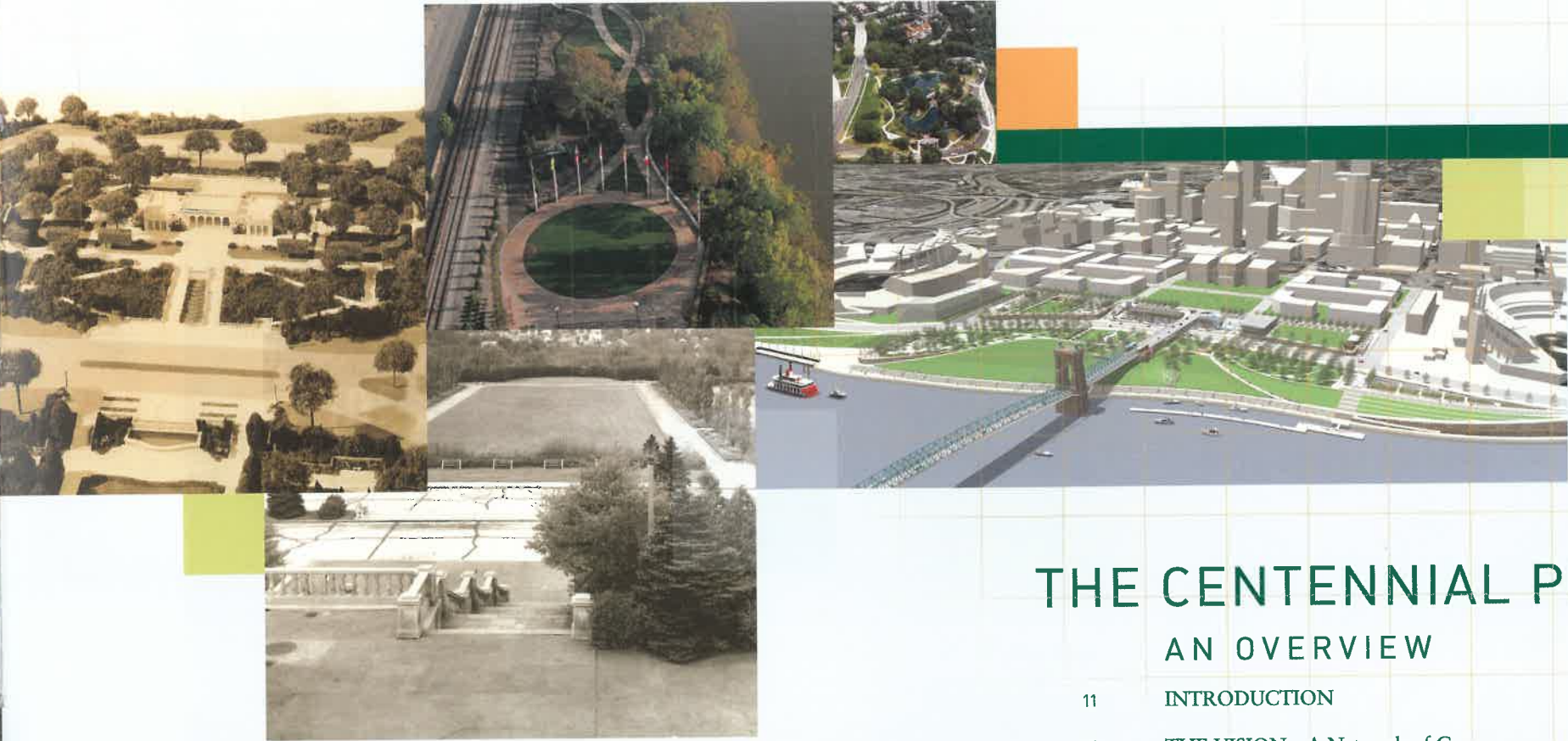
- 174 ACTION STEPS
- 178 OPERATING BUDGET
- 179 FUNDING MATRIX

OUR PLAN FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY





1



# THE CENTENNIAL PLAN

## AN OVERVIEW

- 11 INTRODUCTION
- 12 THE VISION—A Network of Green
- 14 THE FRAMEWORK  
*Mission, Policies & Service Delivery Guidelines*
- 16 PLAN SUMMARY  
*Objectives  
Methodology  
Key Recommendations  
Key Strategies*



Enjoying the sun at Ault Park

## INTRODUCTION

### A SHARED CIVIC AGENDA

One hundred years ago, in 1907, the Cincinnati Park Board unveiled its first park system master plan, prepared by George Kessler, Landscape Architect. Kessler's plan, like those of other major cities during this era proposed a connected system of parks and parkways as a way of lifting the city out of the unhealthy conditions created by the Industrial Revolution. This was the age of the Garden City and City Beautiful Movements—an age of enlightenment in planning American cities.

Kessler sought to capitalize upon scenic views and natural topography by creating a series of crown jewels—parks along the ridgetops surrounding the city core, and a network of scenic parkways linking parks together throughout the city. We are the beneficiaries of this visionary plan, and the Park Board has been the steward, systematically implementing, expanding and celebrating this great legacy.

Today, standing on the shoulders of this seminal work, we look into the future once again.

As our city is challenged by flight to the suburbs, rising crime and social tensions, and limited budgets and staff, *we call upon parks as agents of transformation.* We imagine our city can be great once again if we celebrate our assets—our parks and natural resources; our arts, educational institutions and cultural resources; and our wonderfully diverse and talented citizens and businesses.

The *Centennial Master Plan* builds upon our rich history by revisiting park's power to shape a city; by expanding the connective network Kessler started; and by addressing contemporary issues such as sustainability, crime prevention through environmental design, and reengagement with our citizens and partner institutions to provide services and facilities that are current, relevant, responsible and efficient. This is our plan for the 21st Century—one that will help bring our city back to greatness.

*“We call upon parks as  
AGENTS OF  
TRANSFORMATION.”*



Top: Enjoying a Cincinnati Park

Bottom: Tulips at Theodore M. Berry International Friendship Park

# THE VISION

## A NETWORK OF GREEN

The vision for Cincinnati's park system fulfills the destiny that Kessler started—a well distributed, well connected network that capitalizes on the land's natural gifts and provides facilities and venues that contribute to the health and viability of the City.

### Vision Statement

Cincinnati is a city where greenspace and parklands touch the lives of all people.

*It is a city where:*

- A network of parkways, greenways and open spaces shape the future of the entire region.
- Distinctive parklands, beautifully designed and maintained facilities, gardens, and greenspaces abound.

—Parks provide natural settings for the community's outdoor leisure activities, education, and growth.

—Parks provide enrichment through programs, events, services, and community celebrations.

Conservation, investments, appreciation, and enjoyment of our parks' cultural and natural resources will bring this vision to life.







Above: A mother and child swing at Dunore Park.

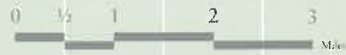
Right: Caldwell Park



# CINCINNATI PARKS CENTENNIAL MASTER PLAN

## Key

-  Existing Parkway/Boulevards
-  Proposed Parkway/Boulevards
-  Proposed Interstate Parkways
-  Existing Parks
-  Flagship Projects
-  Hillside Greenways
-  River Greenways



GIS layers/Information provided by: CAGIS, Cincinnati Park Board and Human Nature

OVERVIEW

# THE FRAMEWORK

## MISSION

Achieving the vision requires a mission with complementary and empowering organizational values, policies, and service delivery guidelines.

### Mission Statement

*To conserve, manage, sustain, and enhance parks' natural and cultural resources and public green space for the enjoyment, enlightenment, and enrichment of the Cincinnati community.*

## Organizational Values

The Cincinnati Park Board shall manage and sustain a park system which conserves natural resources and provides programs, facilities, and services that meet the following basic principles:

- › Clean
- › Safe
- › Reliable
- › Green
- › Beautiful
- › Enriching

## POLICIES

- › Provide a safe, clean, and reliable park system
- › Beautify and visually enhance the city's parks and public green spaces
- › Design and manage the park system's resources in an environmentally sound and sustainable manner
- › Provide distinctive and natural settings for park programs, services, and for individual and community outdoor leisure needs
- › Provide for the community's environmental education needs
- › Help protect the city's natural resources
- › Act as a catalyst for economic development and growth
- › Provide non-discriminatory and barrier-free facilities and services
- › Provide an equitable and accessible park system with a balance of free and fee facilities and services
- › Provide a community-responsive park system which engages all citizens
- › Provide a daily link with the natural environment
- › Provide sound maintenance and support for park facilities, infrastructure, and features
- › Provide a work environment which promotes growth and excellence



Eden Park Gazebo and Mirror Lake

## SERVICE DELIVERY GUIDELINES

- › Manage and operate the park system consistent with the City Charter, Park Board goals/policies, and Parks Master Plan
- › Promote and encourage the use of diverse partnerships in managing, developing, advocating for, and operating the park system
- › Promote use of park facilities, programs, and services
- › Generate revenue to help sustain the system through specialized facilities, programs, and services in a manner consistent with Parks' mission
- › Enhance the park system and complement public funding by developing and leveraging non-public funding sources
- › Reforest the city's parks, streets, and open spaces
- › Provide interpretation of the park system's natural, historic, artistic, and cultural resources
- › Monitor, and update the land management plan for park properties and operate in a manner consistent with the plan
- › Seek a system-wide goal of 60% natural and 40% developed areas
- › Seek a fair geographic distribution of services, programs, facilities, and operations to serve community needs
- › Maintain, conserve, and restore the park system's historic and aesthetic character
- › Provide an efficient, effective park system through re-engineering and innovation
- › Sustain the park system with basic levels of public funding
- › Promote linkages between parks and open space facilities through use of parkways, scenic drives, greenways, linear parks, and trails
- › Beautify parks and public spaces through art and horticulture



## PLAN SUMMARY

The over-arching goal is to maintain Cincinnati Parks' high standard of excellence and continue to build on a reputation as one of the country's premier urban park systems. The plan looks beyond our borders for regional, national and international trends, innovations and successes. It is built on the premise that parks are catalysts for revitalization and that parks need to be protected, sustained and celebrated. It is also built on the premise that parks are focal points of activity, amenity, community and beauty comprised of cultural and natural resources. And it is built on the idea that parks enrich us all.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

- › Describe a compelling vision for parks and public greenspace which also shapes the development of the region
- › Guide future system enhancements
- › Build community awareness, support and value
- › Promote the effective use of financial resources
- › Focus priorities and set action steps
- › Assure a system which is responsive to community needs and change
- › Promote sustainability

### METHODOLOGY

Community input, backed by methodical research, testing and analysis shaped the Centennial Master Plan. The community provided input in a variety of ways including public meetings, citizen steering and advisory committees, numerous stakeholder meetings, and through a citywide citizen survey.



Left: The entrance sign at Mt. Airy's treehouse.

Right: A mother and children walk through the woods at Caldwell Park.



## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a summary of the plan's key recommendations and strategies. The foundation for the plan comes from a number of basic premises and principles. The plan is built on the premise that Cincinnati has a strong existing system of parks, parkways, and open spaces with a history of excellence. Another plan premise is that this system is a connective network that links the community together. Parks are also seen as catalysts for revitalization and part of a network of community assets that should be protected, sustained and celebrated. Finally, parks are seen as focal points of activity, amenities, beauty, and protected places comprised of cultural resources, natural resources, and natural systems.



### Policy Recommendations

- › Maintain the Board of Park Commissioners as a separate and independent Commission, operating the City of Cincinnati park system
- › Strive to achieve an economically and environmentally sustainable park system
- › Provide leadership in environmentally responsible practices
- › Continue Parks' efforts at achieving "universal" access
- › Continue Parks' horticultural excellence and seek to make Cincinnati a national horticultural center
- › Establish a designated percentage of tax dollars, supplemented and balanced by endowments, revenues, grants, and donations to sustain the staffing and maintenance of Parks
- › Protect natural resources, reforest the city, and link parks. Strategies include:
  - Implementing the Natural Resources Management Plan
  - Key acquisitions and property donations/easements adjacent to parks and preserves
  - Conserving and enhancing the hillsides, Ohio River, Little Miami and Mill Creek greenway corridors

### Organization and Services Recommendations

- › Enhance the marketing of Park's services, facilities and programs and increase outreach efforts to minority communities, seniors, and young professionals
- › Nurture and support volunteer opportunities and expand private giving to Parks
- › Increase the capacity of the Park Board and Park Foundation with key new positions and recovery of old positions
- › Broaden the reach and scope of nature education
- › Increase the number, diversity, reach, and scope of programs and events
- › Enhance and foster partnerships in art, education, programs, park operations, capital improvements, and park services
- › Continue partnering with Hamilton County Park District (HCPD) to provide city and regional park services. Explore additional collaborations and means to foster direct city benefits from the existing county-wide parks tax levy—within city limits
- › Develop in partnership with others, a regional trails entity which would be responsible for funding the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of bike/mixed-use trails
- › Maintain the Park Board as a separate entity from the Recreation Commission but continue to seek refinements and greater efficiencies of park and recreation operations and collaborations

## Funding Recommendations

- › Maintain a balance of free and fee facilities and services while strategically increasing fees and rentals at targeted locations and for services for which program users can pay their own way
- › Stabilize the Parks' operating budget by designating a percentage of city General Funds for Parks
- › Create new or enhanced facilities to generate revenue while providing services. This includes new restaurants and concessions at several sites, new or expanded rental facilities, and an expanded Krohn Conservatory
- › Expand the street tree program through stepped increases in the assessment rate
- › Implement new funding initiatives at key locations including a Park Improvement District (PID) at Burnet Woods and at Lytle Park, limited sales of surplus park-owned properties, developer-built and operated neighborhood parks, and new concession operations and joint developments

## Capital Improvement Recommendations

- › Continue investments in neighborhood parks to renovate infrastructure, make enhancements, and carry out individual park master plans
- › Develop new neighborhood parks and greenspaces in support of community revitalization efforts
- › Expand the concept of parkways to embrace boulevards, greenways, and landscaped interstate highways
- › *Key new/upgraded facilities include:*
  - Cincinnati Riverfront Park (CRP)
  - Uptown Parks enhancements
  - Washington Park and Lytle Park enhancements
  - Mt. Airy improvements including a bike trail and arboretum improvements
  - Expansion of Krohn and Krohn gardens
  - Eden Park improvements—"The Gardens of Eden"
- › Develop several key new services and facilities to generate revenue and draw more people to parks:
  - Restaurants at CRP and Burnet Woods
  - Rental Pavilions at Inwood Park and Fairview Park
  - Expanding Maple Ridge Lodge
  - Expanding Krohn Conservatory's exhibition and display space, add visitor services and educational facilities and add food service
- › Concentrate a major portion of capital improvements in key areas:
  - Downtown and the basin/core (OTR, West End)
  - Uptown (Corryville, CUF, Clifton, Avondale, Mt. Auburn)
- › Over a 10 to 20 year period, carry out a capital improvement program funded from a mix of public and private sources. Invest public funds to leverage private funds



Above: The pavilion at Alms Park.  
Far Left: A mother and children walk through the Twin Lakes area at Eden Park.  
Right: The bandstand at Washington Park.

## KEY STRATEGIES

To help implement the Master Plan's Key Recommendations, are several Key Strategies.

### Building the Centerpiece: Cincinnati Riverfront Park

The most dramatic new park included in The Plan is the Cincinnati Riverfront Park—finally reconnecting our downtown to the Ohio River.

It will be the centerpiece of the park system, the front door to our city, and the living room where we hold key events and celebrations. It will also be part of a larger strategic agenda to invigorate the core of our city and region.

### Strengthening the Urban Core

Downtown, Over-the-Rhine, Uptown and the Mill Creek Valley all need more parks, greenspace and more greenway connections. With community and financial support and new partnerships, the Park Board could be a pivotal investment in the renaissance of our urban core.

### Strengthening the Region | City

Through new and enhanced park facilities serving the region, and programs, expanded awareness, partnerships, and actions, the Park Board can help improve the city's image and the quality of life in the region.

### Strengthening the Neighborhoods

By enhancing neighborhood parks, adding programs and services and building even more relationships with communities, including expanding Park Advisory Councils, the Park Board can help drive neighborhood revitalization.

### Continued Upgrades Throughout the System

Since the 1992 Plan Update, progress has been made on upgrades to existing parks, parkways, preserves and other assets throughout the system. The upgrades have been distributed to provide an equitable balance to all regions of the city, while also responding to individual site and neighborhood challenges and opportunities, while continuing to make the park system universally accessible.

This work is the core of the Park Board's mission and responsibilities to the citizens, and it should continue to be a primary focus, achieved by expanding partnerships, identifying new sources of funding, and finding ways to be even more efficient and effective.

### Sustainability, Stewardship ☞ Strengthening Natural Systems

Continued work on assembling and connecting key properties and facilities along our hillsides and streams, appropriately managing and conserving our parklands and nurturing and planting the urban forest are all vital to the long-term economic, social and environmental health of our city. Park facilities, services and land management and operational practices should all be sustainable economically and environmentally.

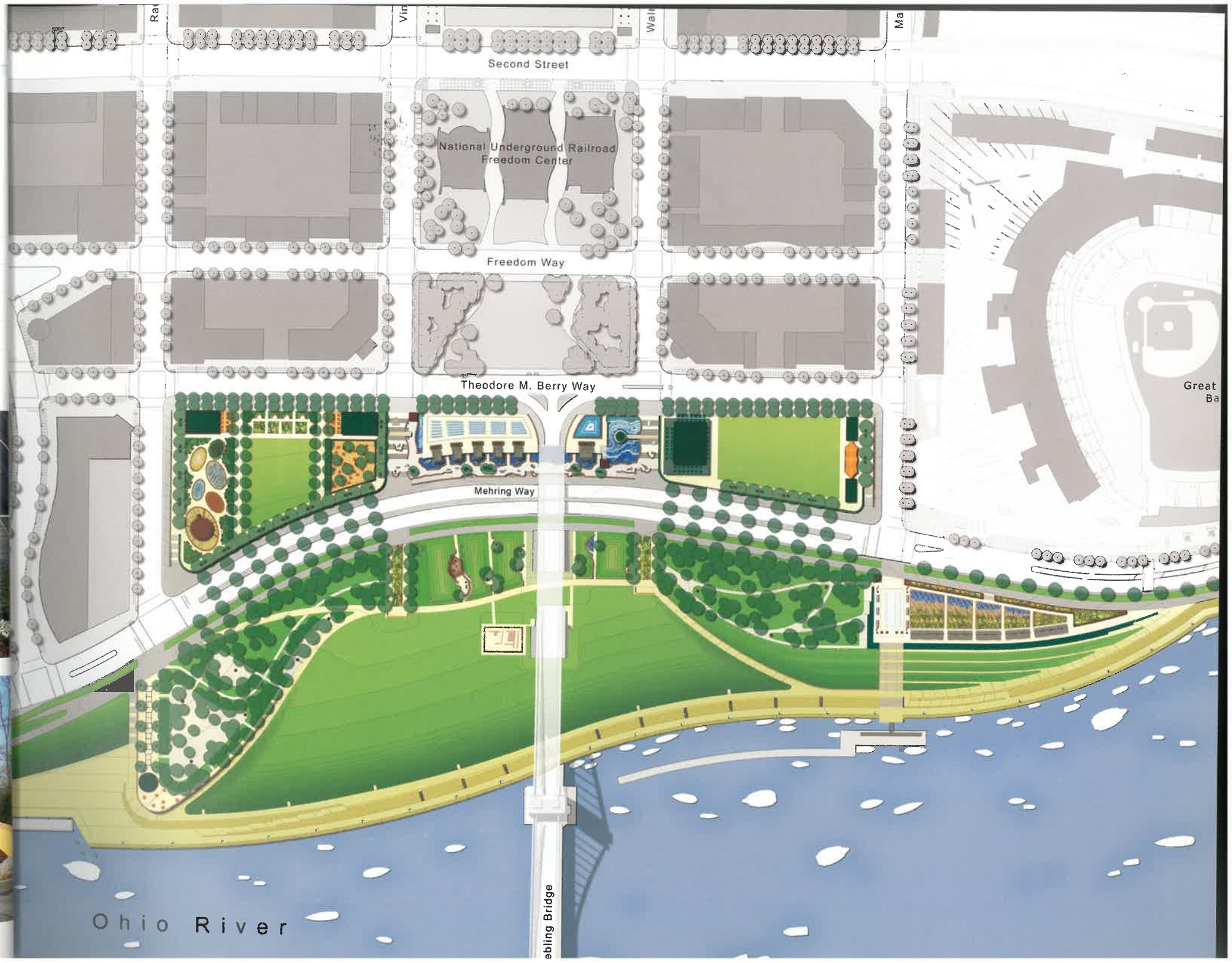
*"Parks and  
GREENSPACE driving  
city REVITALIZATION  
and regional growth is  
a central theme of the plan."*



Right Top: Fort Washington Way planter

Right Bottom: A sculpture at Theodore M. Berry International Friendship Park

Far Right: Cincinnati Riverfront Park



Second Street

National Underground Railroad Freedom Center

Freedom Way

Theodore M. Berry Way

Mehring Way

Great Ballpark

Ohio River

Abing Bridge

# 2





# GROWING THE PLAN

## THE BACKGROUND

- 24 WHY A NEW PLAN & HOW TO GET THERE
- 26 THE CONTEXT: CHALLENGES, TRENDS & ISSUES
- 29 REVISITING THE PAST
  - 30 *Adolph Strauch and the Early Years*
  - 32 *The Kessler Legacy*
  - 34 *The 1992 Master Plan*
  - 36 *Accomplishments*
- 41 COMMUNITY INPUT FOR THE CENTENNIAL PLAN
  - 41 *Citizen Survey*
  - 43 *Public Meetings*
  - 44 *Stakeholder Meetings*
  - 45 *Steering & Advisory Committee*
- 46 RESEARCH FINDINGS
  - 48 *Related Plans and Initiatives*
  - 51 *Demographic Findings*
  - 52 *Assessment of Current System*
  - 54 *Benchmarking Park Funding Nationally*
  - 57 *Initiatives of Other Cities in the Region*
  - 59 *National Research Findings*

## WHY A NEW PLAN AND HOW TO GET THERE

### PURPOSE

Cincinnati Parks has a legacy of master planning, starting with the 1907 Kessler Plan, amplified by City plans of 1925 and 1948, and embodied in the comprehensive park plan of 1992. A new plan is necessary to assess and update the 1992 plan and our accomplishments since then, and to address new challenges and needs. A new plan will better equip the Park Board with the latest tools to carry out Park's mission of providing excellent park services, and chart a path to a new vision for the park system and the city. And 2007 is an historic time for the park system as it marks the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Board of Park Commissioners in 1906, and the adoption of the Kessler Plan in 1907. Now is a vital time to look back and appreciate our legacy, and to honor and carry forward the tradition of wise stewardship and excellence.

Fourteen years after the last master plan was approved, the Park Board needed to prepare an updated plan. Much of the 1992 plan was accomplished but there are new challenges and new opportunities. Specific objectives of the new plan include the following:

1. *Evaluate the 1992 Plan*  
Assess what was accomplished and what remains to be done; examine elements that are no longer valid or feasible or that require modification.
2. *Add new Initiatives*  
Incorporate newly identified needs, opportunities, programs, services and initiatives, and individual park master plans

3. *Refine Organization*  
Incorporate updated organizational, financial and policy changes
4. *Update Capital Budget*  
Create a new long-range capital budget
5. *Consider Today's Context*  
Evaluate needs over the next 10 to 20 years in light of the current and projected economic picture. Consider changes in technology, demographics and projected changes in government. This contextual evaluation includes examining public and private funding, community needs, user opinions, partnership status, projected development patterns and projects, and state-of-the-art park programs, services, facilities and practices.

### Process

The planning process is one built on community input, analysis of challenges, trends and issues, and extensive research into best practices, demographics, and national research findings. The process also encompasses assessments of the current system's capital, operational and financial needs, and reviews of regional initiatives.

The process consisted of the following steps:

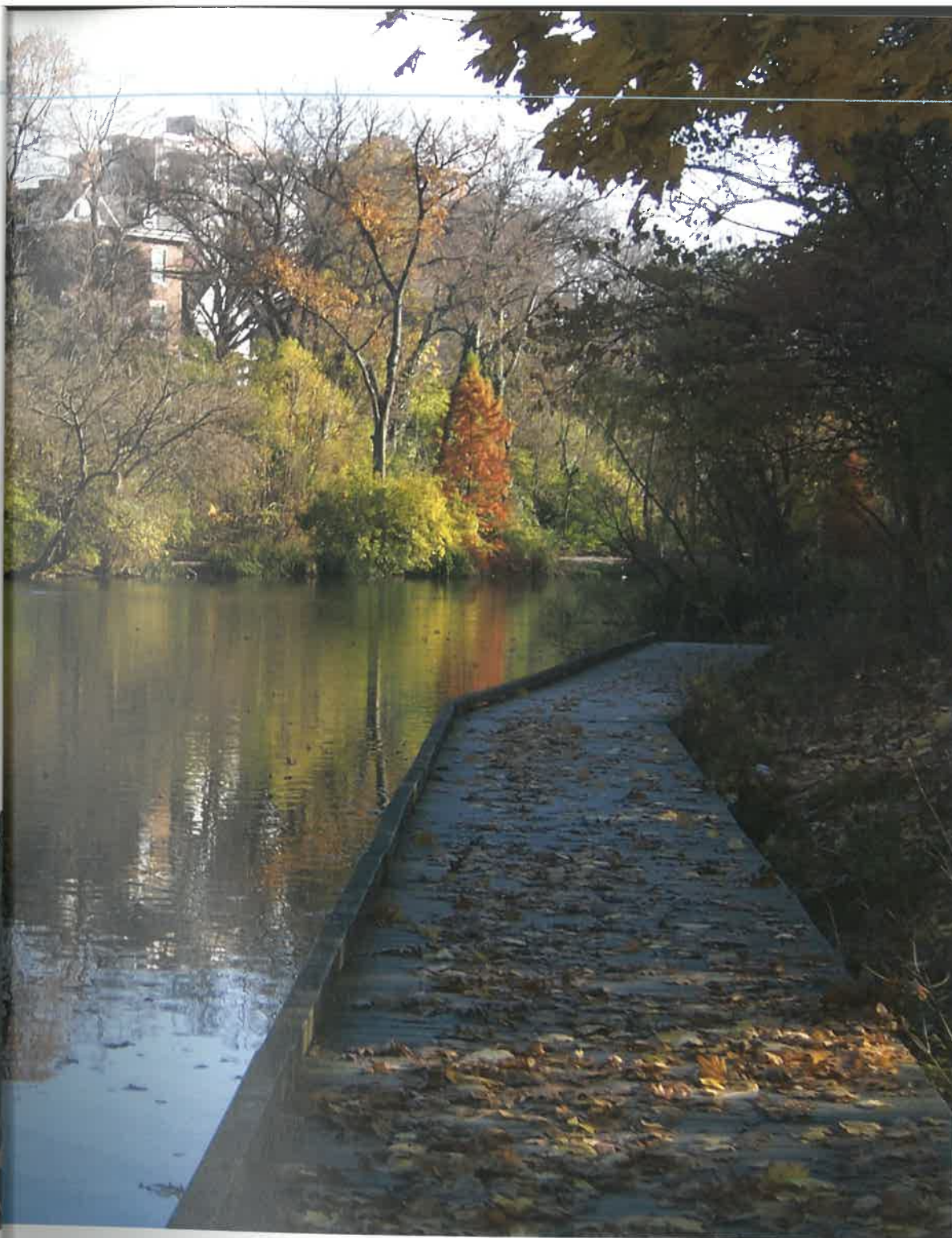
- Identification of stakeholders and citizens to serve on advisory committees
- Development of plan goals and objectives
- Compilation/Assessment of information including staff input, system tours and research
- Public input through citizen survey, stakeholder meetings, public meetings and establishment of a Website and message board
- Evaluation and testing
- Final plan development

Right: Burnet Woods.  
Below: One of the Master Plan's public meetings.



*"Input from the COMMUNITY  
is the ENERGY that has  
driven the plan."*





*“Parks and  
GREENSPACE driving  
city REVITALIZATION  
and regional growth is  
a central theme of the plan.”*

## THE CONTEXT: CHALLENGES, TRENDS, & ISSUES

*The Park Board's future depends on clearly understanding and meeting challenges, monitoring and assessing trends, addressing issues and taking advantage of opportunities. Some of these challenges, trends and issues are identified below.*

### CHALLENGES

#### *Funding*

City, State and Federal dollars for operations and capital improvements are limited, at least for the short term. Operating budget shortfalls in the City will be particularly challenging.

#### *Staffing & Managing Parks*

Just as it seems clear city tax-supported funding will be challenged to support Park's needs, the ability to fill vacant positions, let alone create new ones, is expected to be difficult. Keeping existing positions may also be challenging as the City looks to short-term deficits.

Parks needs to continue ongoing efforts to re-engineer services, to seek new efficiencies, service enhancements and cost savings, examine tools such as outsourcing, managed competition and new technologies. The organization must continue creating more effective management practices, focusing on core services and "right-sizing" the organization.

Former structure at Lytle Park





### *Natural Resource Management*

Habitat management and enhancement are important components of the park system as is protection of critical properties. Challenges include management of invasive plants and animals, funding to manage and maintain parks and greenways and to plant and maintain the urban forest, deer management, and mechanisms and funding to protect endangered properties. Refining resource management practices and working with partners to promote better urban ecology practices are also a challenge.

### *Evolving Role of Parks*

While the Park Board's charter responsibilities focus on the care and management of parks and parkways, the organization is being called on to play a larger role in our city's health and viability. Parks does not possess the empowerment or resources to fully carry out this expanded role such as caring for more city gateways and other city-owned properties. Where this expanded role is appropriate and sustainable, the Board stands willing to creatively take on new challenges.

*“Regular UPDATING of the plan gives the Park Board the most current tools to carry out THEIR MISSION.”*

## TRENDS

### *Demographics*

Though both the county and in-lying suburbs are losing population, the region is growing. The city had significant population losses in recent decades but current trends show growth within city limits. While an aging population and large numbers of city residents living in poverty is a challenge, recent success at attracting the “creative class” to the city and to parks is a positive trend. And serving the needs of “baby boomers,” growing minority populations and seniors are all opportunities for parks.

### *Development Patterns*

There is movement back into the city as shown in recent census data and evidenced by new and renovated housing units in and near downtown, along the river and in Uptown. Community development corporations are actively revitalizing Uptown in the vicinity of the University of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC) is carrying out development downtown, on the riverfront and in Over-The-Rhine. Xavier is carrying out development in Evanston. Private developers are building new projects on both sides of the river and in proximity to parks. And the Cincinnati Public Schools continue on a major rebuilding project.

There is a new sense of regionalism and regional cooperation in numerous initiatives and this will retain and attract business and draw new residents and visitors. A strong park system supports these initiatives and trends, which in turn help sustain and support parks.

### *New Facilities & Services*

Recognizing the importance of parks and recreation to community health is a recent trend, especially now that obesity is a major health concern. This leads to increased support for hiking and biking trails, outdoor activities and parks. Relative newcomers to parks are dog parks and disc golf courses, both of which were built in Cincinnati parks years ago as pilot projects. They have been successful and expanded, with consideration for additional facilities in the future.

Another recent trend is the use of technology to enhance the park visitor's experience and to improve operations and service delivery.



## ISSUES/OPPORTUNITIES

### *Arts & Education*

In recent years, Parks has gotten significantly more involved in promoting, supporting and participating in the arts. This has included commissioning public art at Theodore Berry International Friendship Park, incorporating art into capital improvements, restoring public artworks, and partnering with a number of arts organizations. This is a relatively new way to increase public awareness and support of both art and parks and to add to our city's quality of life. It has also been demonstrated that the arts is an important economic engine.

Parks also has a rich tradition of providing nature education services to the City. Opportunities to expand/refine these services include more interpretive education at sites throughout the system, in a variety of partnerships and at diverse sites throughout the community, including schools and community centers, and at nature centers. Educating children, the future stewards of our planet, is critical and nature education and environmental work projects are ways of engaging young people, keeping them focused on productive activities.

### *Partnerships*

As in the 1992 Plan, partnerships remain a key ingredient of a successful park system. Parks has been successful in developing and nurturing partnerships and will need to continue to do so with both public and private partners.



### *Civic Beautification*

The visual quality of our gateways and prominent roadways creates an impression about the entire city. Parks has enhanced the city's image at such properties for which resources have been made available. However, many more sites exist for which financial resources are unavailable. It is important to find the funding and collaboration needed to landscape and maintain these areas.

### *Advocacy & Volunteering*

In order to continue to build support for Parks and to encourage public use of parks, advocacy and the dissemination of public information will be key. A strong volunteer program also remains important to the future of parks. With recent and successful efforts to enlarge the program, this will remain a key part of the plan.



Nature Education

*“PARTNERSHIPS are a  
KEY INGREDIENT of a  
successful park system.”*

# REVISITING THE PAST

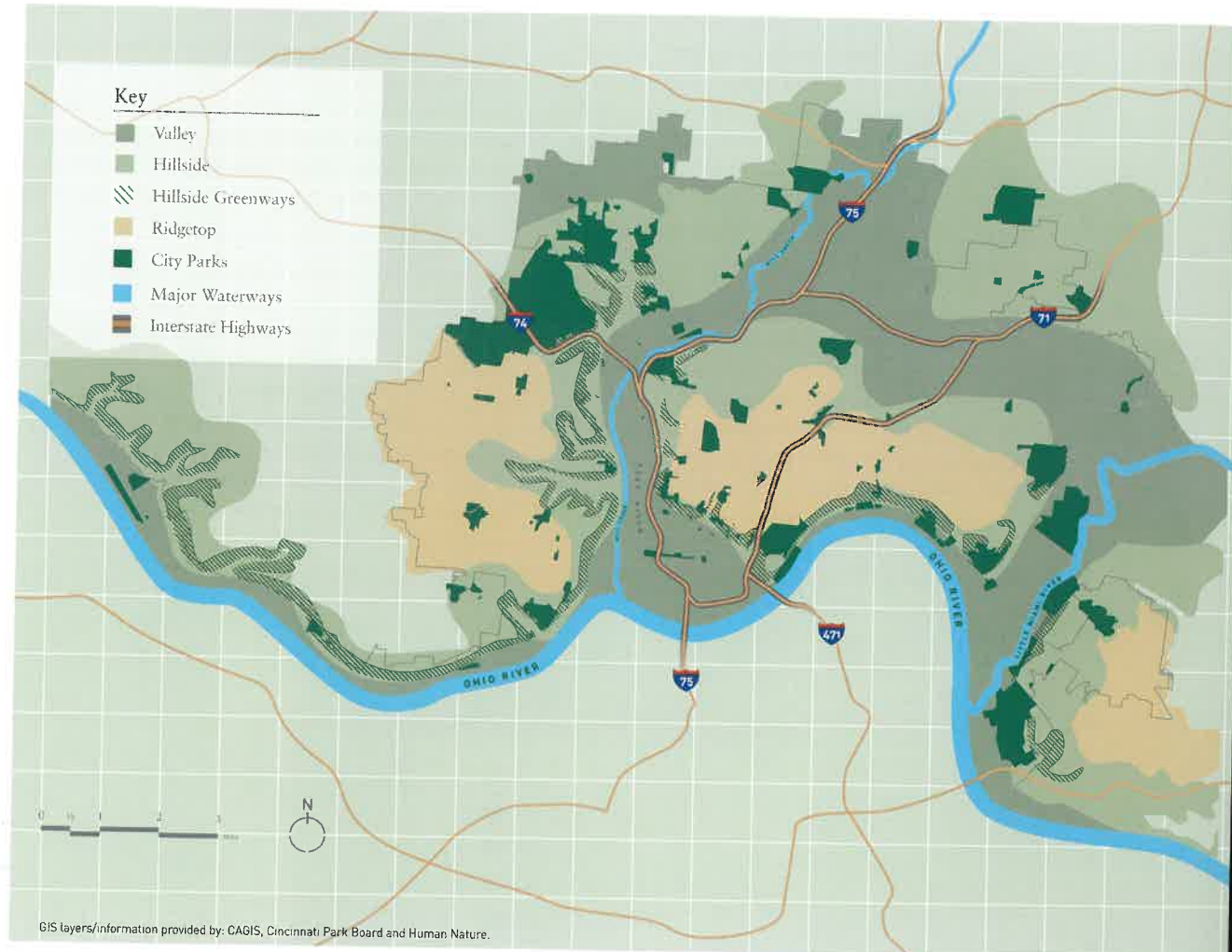
## HISTORY



It has been said that Cincinnati is not a city of parks so much as it is a city within a park. This sense of enveloping green and nature is easy to understand. The 5,000 acre park system represents approximately 10% of the city's land area, with parks spread throughout the city's neighborhoods. There are green hillsides along the rivers and valleys. The parkway and boulevard system effectively weaves together many of these sites. There are 70 neighborhood parks, 34 nature preserves, and thousands of street trees along the city's 1,000 miles of streets. From the air, Cincinnati's many trees and wooded hillsides give the impression that the city is one big park. Though Mother Nature's original master plan blessed the city with its ridgetops, hillsides and valleys, this park-like character did not happen by accident.

*“a CITY within  
a PARK.”*

## PARKS ASSOCIATION WITH NATURAL SYSTEMS



### Adolph Strauch and the Early Years

Cincinnati's park system dates back to the mid 19th century, when several parks were carved out of what was then one of the country's fastest growing cities in the years immediately preceding the Civil War. Piatt Park, located in downtown, was the City's first park, dedicated in 1817. Several other parks would follow starting in the 1850s such as Lincoln Park, Washington Park, Hopkins Park, Eden Park and Burnet Woods.

Adolph Strauch, a Prussian-born designer influenced by Europe's pastoral and transformative trends shaped Cincinnati's first significant era. He landed in Cincinnati by accident, but soon influenced not only several major parks, but many estates, and the country's most innovative cemetery design at the time—Spring Grove Cemetery, a National Historic Landmark. Strauch's efforts as designer and superintendent brought artfulness and civic intention to our first parks, providing oases in the midst of an industrialized city.

These oases were intended to return nature, health and civility to the city, and they were immensely popular. Elegantly articulated drives, walkways, plantings and features inspired those who visited, and surrounding property values increased. While most of these first parks still exist today (except Lincoln Park), they have been modified over time.

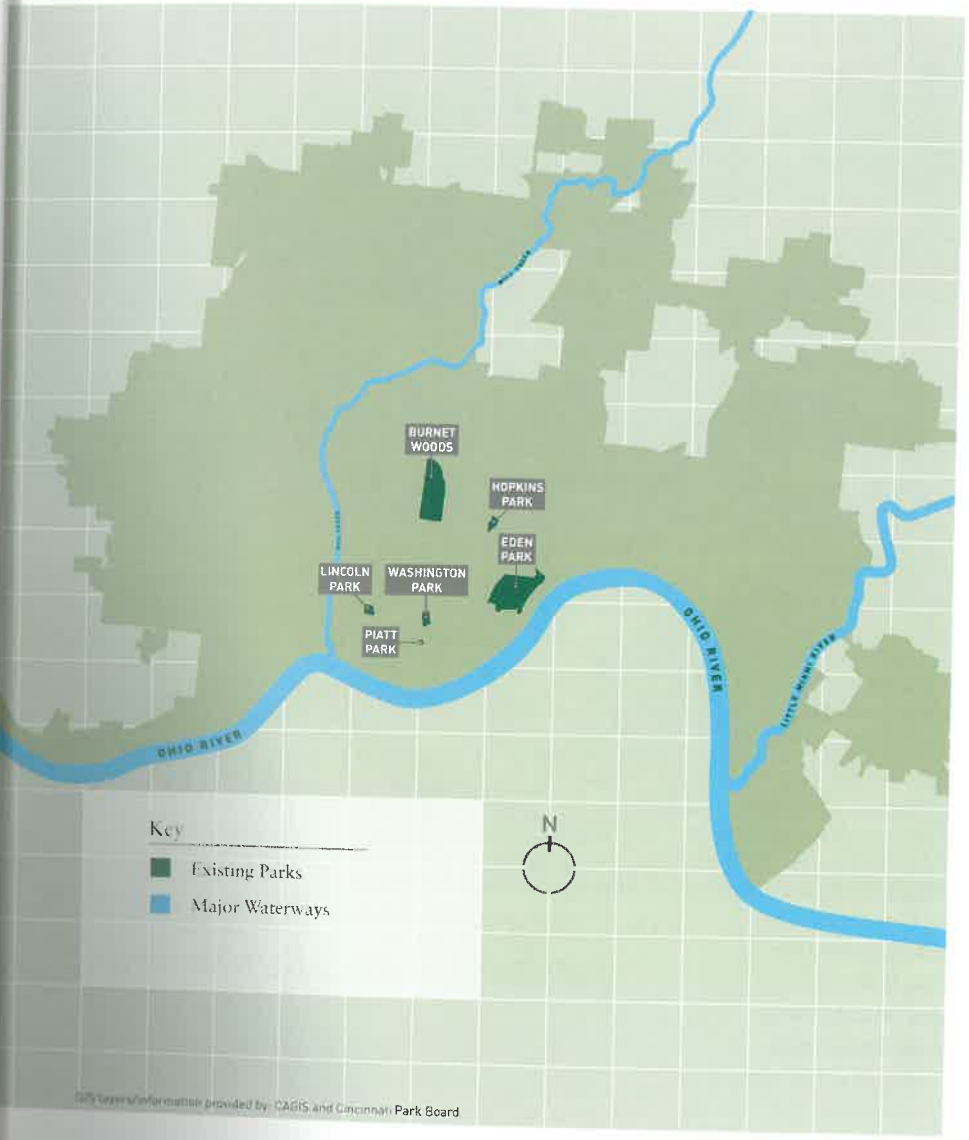
Building upon these early park successes, and in response to continued urban growth and industrialization, citizens lobbied for and ultimately passed an amendment to the City charter in 1906 which established an independent Board of Park Commissioners. They immediately went to work to develop a more comprehensive approach to parks, hiring one of America's foremost landscape architects and park planners, George Kessler, to create the city's first park system master plan.



Adolph Strauch

“STRAUCH *was the*  
*first Cincinnati parks’*  
DESIGNER *and*  
SUPERINTENDENT.”

# 1850-1907 STRAUCH ERA PARKS



GIS layers/information provided by: CAGIS and Cincinnati Park Board

# 1907 KESSLER PARK PLAN



GIS layers/information provided by: CAGIS and Cincinnati Park Board.

## The Kessler Legacy

Kessler was part of a group of enlightened planners, architects and landscape architects promoting ways to make cities more livable and inspiring. They led an era known as the “City Beautiful” movement—a body of work aimed at beautifying cities and creating a visual sense of large-scale order, often through the use of new boulevards, wide avenues and new public parks and squares. The Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 embodied many of the movement’s principles including the use of classical architecture.

Given that as much as 10% of the country’s population visited the fair (21 million people), and considering the popularization of its imagery, the fair and its landscape plan by Frederick Law Olmsted triggered the imagination of many. It is not surprising therefore, that Cincinnati’s new park plan would be one of large scope and scale, reshaping the city, and borrowing imagery from older European cities.

George Kessler’s rise to fame as a park planner started with his 1893 plan for Kansas City’s Parks and Boulevards. He followed it with a landscape plan for the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair and then park plans for cities such as Dallas, Fort Worth, Denver, Indianapolis, Syracuse, Memphis, St. Louis, and South Bend. He also did plans for Miami University and cities in China.

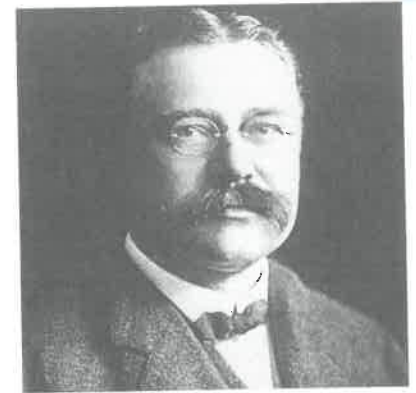
The final impetus to hire Kessler and create a plan for Cincinnati’s parks came from the civic-mindedness of citizens who made up the Greater Park League and a Park Commission led by prominent community members.

The park system plan authored by George Kessler (1862–1923) and adopted by the Park Board and the city in 1907, was a plan of large scope and vision. Now commonly known as the “Kessler Plan,” it articulated a vision of neighborhood parks, outlying regional preserves, parkways and grand boulevards. Parkway were planned along the old Miami and Erie Canal bed and along the Ohio River. Promenades, boulevards and linear parks were proposed to connect major parks, public squares and public buildings. New parks with sweeping hilltop views were proposed, as well as new neighborhood parks and recreation sites for the city’s dense neighborhoods. This was all in stark contrast with the character of the city at that time.

Though many recommendations were not implemented until much later, the plan established a concept of linked, hilltop parks and preserves, and a parkway system tying together parks and public spaces in a scenic way.

It would take decades of civic leadership, public funding and private land donations to make much of the plan happen. And it would take the federal construction programs of the WPA era to create much of the infrastructure, from trails, walls and bridges to beautiful stone park buildings found throughout the system.

At the turn of the 20th century, Cincinnati had only half a dozen parks comprising fewer than 400 acres. This was in a growing industrial city of 326,000. At the beginning of World War I, the system had grown to 34 parks comprising 2,400 acres, which is almost one-half of the size



George Kessler

of today’s system. In many ways, the park system grew up as the city did, with the city spreading up hillsides, annexing nearby communities, and reaching out with the growth of public transportation lines—from inclines to the street railroad system. At the eve of World War II, the system had grown to 61 parks and 4,300 acres, and several of the parkways first proposed in the Kessler Plan were finally constructed.

*“The KESSLER PLAN articulated a VISION of neighborhood PARKS, outlying regional PRESERVES, parkways and boulevards.”*





A historical photo of Lytle Park.

Many of Kessler's ideas and proposals were reinforced and expanded in the city's 1925 and 1948 comprehensive plans, when Cincinnati was a national leader in city planning.

These plans added detail and strategies more specifically aligned with the politics and issues of the day, such as transportation.

The post war period saw continued park growth, particularly with preservation of hillsides and acquisition of park preserves. By 1980, the city established an urban forestry program to reforest and manage its street trees—an inventory of approximately 80,000 trees by the year 2000.

Each subsequent era added to this inventory of public spaces and public facilities culminating at the turn of the 21st Century in the design and construction of new downtown riverfront parks, the creation of a greenway system, and the development of a new park master plan.

## THE 1992 MASTER PLAN

The Cincinnati Park Master Plan of 1992, "Planting the Future," extended the vision of Kessler's 1907 Plan and envisioned a continuous greenway system linking parks and preserves with ribbons of green.

It also launched an era of park renovation and restoration recognizing parks as the city's lifeblood and a catalyst for revitalizing neighborhoods. Major recommendations of the 1992 Plan included:

*"The Cincinnati Park  
Master Plan of 1992  
EXTENDED THE VISION  
of the 1907 plan,  
launching an era of  
RENOVATING AND  
RESTORING parks."*

### 1. Revitalizing Neighborhood Parks

System-wide improvements focused on eliminating safety hazards, renovating infrastructure, eliminating physical barriers to access, restoring historic structures and revitalizing parks and park facilities.

### 2. Enhancing Regional Attractions & Creating New Ones

Major projects were identified including river parks, enhancements at region-serving parks, and improvements at Krohn Conservatory.

### 3. Conserving, Managing & Interpreting Natural Resources

Programmatic changes and expansion of nature education, new land management practices and natural resource protection were recommended. This included the expansion of greenway corridors and trail systems.

### 4. Developing New Partnerships

A host of partnerships were recommended as a way to extend Parks' ability to provide services and accomplish goals.

### 5. Enhancing the City's Image

This strategy focused on enhancing and expanding of the city's parkways and boulevards creating a system of landscaped gateways, and reforesting the city's streets.

### 6. Providing New Programs & Events

Expanding opportunities to participate in programs and increasing their diversity was recommended.

### 7. More Efficient & Effective Services

A series of new positions and reorganization models were recommended to help provide a more responsive, innovative system.

### 8. Funding for Parks

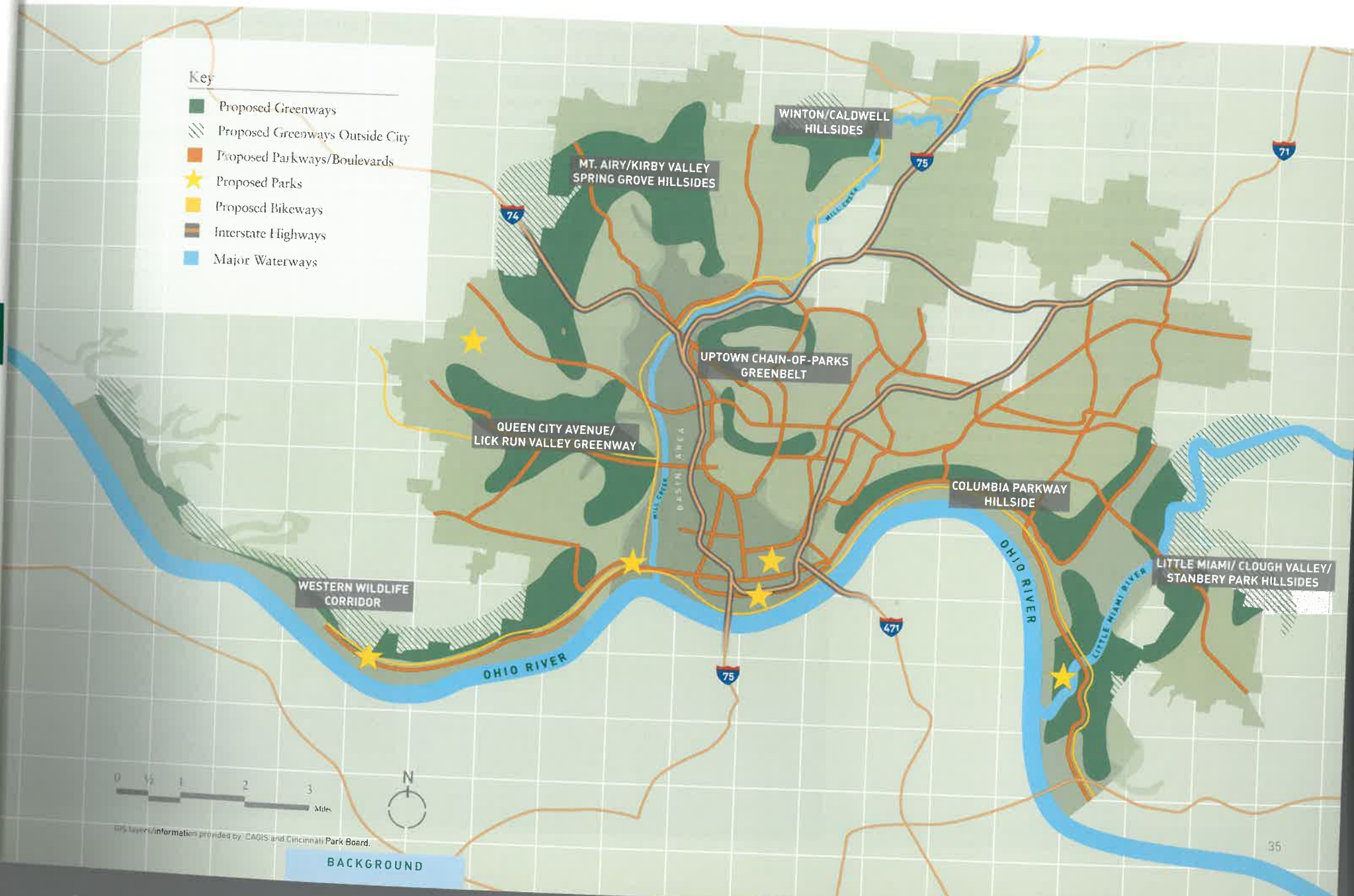
A financial plan recommended a number of funding sources to achieve plan goals including creation of a not-for-profit Parks Foundation.





Key

- Proposed Greenways
- Proposed Greenways Outside City
- Proposed Parkways/Boulevards
- Proposed Parks
- Proposed Bikeways
- Interstate Highways
- Major Waterways



GIS layers/information provided by CAOS and Cincinnati Park Board.

BACKGROUND

## Accomplishments

Parks has completed or initiated many of the recommendations of the 1992 Plan, investing over \$38 million of city capital improvement funds and another \$7.5 million of other public funds.

Additionally, Parks invested over \$7 million of private funding in improvements. In this same time period, the Park system increased by 300 acres through acquisitions, donations and property transfers.

Major organizational changes were accomplished including establishing a Parks Foundation, creating a volunteer coordination program, shifting responsibilities, facilities and staff with the Cincinnati Recreation Commission (CRC) to achieve greater efficiencies and better align with missions, creating a natural resource management section, streamlining the organization and developing a range of new and improved partnerships.

Parks reached the expected end of the 10-year plan implementation at the end of 2002. However, with ambitious plans for a major new downtown park on the central riverfront and many unmet and unfunded additional needs, it was clear Master Plan implementation was not complete. As 2003 drew to a close, implementation was expected to extend at least another six to ten years. It also became apparent that the plan had not addressed several operational and organizational needs.



Castle of Air Pavilion at Theodore Berry International Friendship Park.



### 1. Revitalizing Neighborhood Parks

Park facilities were renovated, historic structures restored, safety hazards eliminated, and most barriers to physical access were removed as Parks became compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

More than \$50 million of public and private money was invested in park's infrastructure. Further improvements and enhancements, however, will continue to be necessary in an historic park system, requiring ongoing renovation.

### 2. Enhancing Regional Attractions

Improvements were made at region-serving parks (Ault, Eden Park, Mt. Airy Forest and French Park) and at Krohn Conservatory. Theodore Berry International Friendship Park and Armleder-Little Miami River Park were built. Expansion and further enhancement of Krohn Conservatory and additional improvements at Eden and French Parks and at Mt. Airy Forest are yet to be accomplished.

### 3. Conserving, Managing & Interpreting Natural Resources

Great strides were made in this area including creation of a natural resource management section, incorporation of CRC's nature education program within the Park Board organization and the addition of over 300 acres of park properties and preserves.

New management practices were also put into place to enhance, interpret, and better sustain natural resources. Nature education was expanded and enhanced with new inner-city programs and outreach and by adding educational programs at Krohn and at other sites. The Bettman Natural Resource Center was established, and improvements were made at all five nature centers and at a number of preserves.



#### 4. Developing New Partnerships

Many new partnerships were created to advance Park's mission, provide services and programs, and reduce park costs. Partnerships included the following:

Cincinnati Public Schools

Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority

Hamilton County Park District

Cincinnati Art Museum

Art Academy of Cincinnati

Artworks

Sister Cities

University of Cincinnati

Xavier University

Cincinnati State

Cincinnati Recreation Commission

Cincinnati Horticultural Society

Civic Garden Center

Hillside Trust

Mill Creek Restoration Project

Little Miami River, Inc.

Environmental & Horticultural Organizations



The historical house in French Park was originally built by Edmund Buxton from 1803-1805. It later had many additions and alterations.



### 5. Enhancing the City's Image

The gateway and roadway landscape program expanded significantly with City Council's mandate to have the Park Board be responsible for landscaping and maintenance of these prominent sites as resources allowed. Major advances were also made in reforesting the city and assessing the tree canopy. A plan was put into place to meet tree canopy standards throughout the city.

### 6. Providing New Programs & Events

New sponsorships were secured to provide for park events and concerts and partnerships were sought to encourage use of park venues for programs and events. However, endowments were no longer able to support some park programming resulting in no major event expansion.

### 7. More Efficient & Effective Services

The organization was streamlined and reengineered. A volunteer program with staffing was put into place. Business and financial services was reorganized to provide a higher level of service to both internal and external customers. Changes were implemented with the Cincinnati Recreation Commission to make both operations more efficient and reduce several areas of duplication. Contract services were expanded in certain areas and managed competition was initiated.



Mt. Airy Treehouse.

## 8. Funding for Parks

More than \$7.5 million of private funding was raised and invested in Parks and over \$7 million in public agency grants were received from County, State and Federal sources. A Cincinnati Parks Foundation was formed and a gift catalog of park needs/opportunities was published. Over \$38 million of city capital improvement funding came to parks over this time period. Significant levels of additional funding, services, materials, and savings were leveraged through partnerships, sponsorships, fundraising and various agreements.

These accomplishments point to a community, a host of volunteers, partners and philanthropists, a Board of Park Commissioners, a Parks Foundation, and a Park Staff that are deeply committed to the vitality of our city and our park system. It is a system built upon vision and action, rich with variety in both cultural and natural resources. It is a legacy that we are charged with nurturing and carrying forward.



Community members enjoy bands at the Acoustic Lunch in Downtown's Piatt Park.



*“Significant levels of FUNDING, services and materials were LEVERAGED THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS, sponsorships, fundraising and agreements.”*

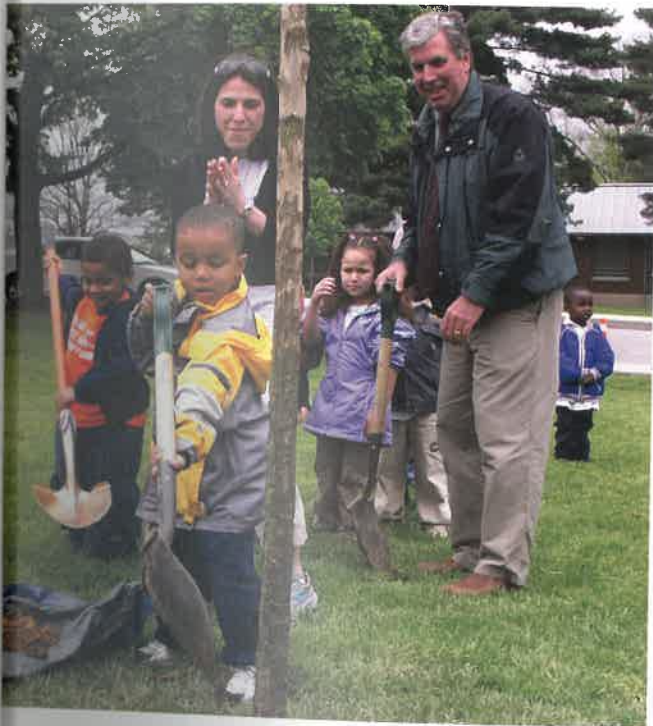


## COMMUNITY INPUT FOR THE CENTENNIAL PLAN

*The community provided input for The Plan in a variety of ways, through Steering and Advisory Committees, through numerous stakeholder meetings related to particular topics and groups, through public meetings, and through a citywide citizen survey.*

### CITIZEN SURVEY

The *Citizens Survey* of 500 Cincinnati residents was conducted by phone and provides some of the most comprehensive input by the community. Following is a summary of key points from the survey.



### Overall Perception

- › Awareness of the Park Board was high (82%) though only about half of respondents were aware of services and programs
- › Awareness is generally lower for those under 35
- › Over 80% of respondents thought Parks was a good investment of tax dollars
- › The Park Board was seen as a strong organization/doing a good job

### Areas of Strength

- › Flower beds and park cleanliness had high ratings
- › Krohn Conservatory was rated very good to excellent by 92% of respondents and 95% were aware of Krohn
- › Over 50% were aware of park volunteer opportunities; for those over 55, awareness was 66%. And 37% expressed an interest in volunteering in parks
- › Parks were known for good stewardship, greenspace protection and well-maintained and renovated parks

*“The COMMUNITY PROVIDED INPUT for the plan in a variety of ways.”*

### Areas for Improvement

- › More than one-third were unaware in general about Parks and almost half were not aware of specific programs and services
- › Nature education and trails were cited as needing improvement
- › In general, responses indicated that more work needed to be done to reach people under 35 and to better reach minority communities
- › In general, awareness of parks was greater in the east district than in the central or west districts and this was also reflected in the ratings respondents gave parks.

### Most Recognized | Frequented Parks

- › Eden Park
- › Ault Park
- › Mount Airy
- › Burnet Woods
- › Alms Park
- › Mount Echo
- › Mount Storm

### Visitation

- › 61% visited a park at least monthly and 22% weekly
- › 93% visited parks at least annually
- › Half of respondents visited Krohn within the last year and a full 98% have visited Krohn at least once
- › Visitation was highest in the East & Central districts and lower in the West
- › Safety concerns were the most common reason not to visit
- › Favorite activities included jogging, walking, playgrounds, picnicking, relaxing, enjoying nature

### Most Commonly Identified Desires

- › More Bikepaths
- › More Concerts and Events
- › Additional Playgrounds
- › More Rental Facilities
- › Expanded Nature Programs

*“Parks were known for good STEWARDSHIP, GREENSPACE PROTECTION, MAINTENANCE and RENOVATION.”*



A neighborhood picnic at Owls Nest Park.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

*Public Meetings* held in the East, West and Central Districts provided another important opportunity for community input. Following is a summary of issues and suggestions from those meetings:

- *Raise awareness* that, according to statistics, parks are some of the safest areas in the city.
- *Increase park activities*, programs, events, and overall usership as a deterrent to undesirable activities
- *Apply Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)* principles (lighting, visibility, emergency phones, etc.)
- *Work with* communities and business districts to create parks that are community hubs/village greens/squares
- *Create a program and policy* to address the deer problem
- *Further connect parks* by greenways, bike trails, parkways, highway greenspace, hillside stairs, inclines—with each other, the city core, Mill Creek and other greenways/scenic ways (i.e. Little Miami)
- *Be a regional leader* in sustainability, green design and management practices
- *Provide more events* (art fairs, movies, outdoor concerts, fireworks, show mobile, tourist attractions and compatible activities such as disc golf, water sports, climbing & community gardening)
- *Expand partnerships* with educational institutions (from children through adult education) and cultural institutions to provide more educational and nature recreational programming as well as tourism
- *Strengthen Parks identity* with signs, more publicity and more events—use the 100th anniversary to publicize Parks
- *Look at a regional/metro government* or some other collaborative structure (should a merger of CPB, CRC and/or HCPD be considered?)
- *Introduce commercial facilities* including snack bars/concessions and paid activities/features for increased funding



## STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

A series of stakeholder meetings were convened to address areas of common interest with a variety of stakeholders. These groups included development interests, City departments, other providers of park and recreation services, planning agencies and different organizations and groups—all which are impacted by or which impact parks and greenspace.

Discussions included identifying potential collaborations and partnerships, sharing future plans, and determining how a new park system plan could further stakeholder interests, as well as determining how stakeholders might be able to further park and environmental interests. All groups were asked to contribute ideas to the new park plan and share concerns.

Critical stakeholder groups included park staff, members of the Parks Foundation, and members of various park advisory councils.

### Stakeholders included the following:

- › City Departments of Transportation and of Community Development
- › Metropolitan Sewer District and City Waterworks
- › Regional Planners including OKI, Hamilton County Planning and City of Cincinnati Planning
- › Development groups of 3CDC and Uptown Consortium
- › Hamilton County Park District and Cincinnati Recreation Commission
- › Cincinnati Police
- › Cincinnati Museum Center, Cincinnati Art Museum and Cincinnati Zoo
- › U.C., Xavier and Cincinnati State
- › Cincinnati Parks Foundation
- › Cincinnati Parks Advisory Councils
- › Park staff
- › Volunteers

Each of the stakeholder group meetings contributed valuable input to the plan and in many instances set the framework for new initiatives and potential future collaborations.



## STEERING & ADVISORY COMMITTEE

*Steering & Advisory Committee members* were asked to share what they believed to be the Park Board's strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities. Following is a summary of that input.

### Challenges

- Funding
- Undesirable Activities
- Greenspace Protection
- Increased Awareness
- Adequate Personnel
- City Leadership
- Equity
- Institutional Partner Agreements
- Hamilton County Parks also offers parks and services—How to address this issue.
- Political Boundaries
- Deer Management

### Strengths

- Amount of Green Area
- Diversity and Distribution of Facilities
- Civic Pride
- Beauty
- Vistas
- History
- Horticulture
- Nature Education
- Maintenance
- Friendly / Helpful Staff
- Proximity to Cultural Institutions

### Weaknesses

- Funding
- Self-Promotion
- Low Usership
- Limited Staff
- Lack of Adequate Contemporary Facilities
- Sustainability

### Opportunities

- Partnerships
- Volunteers
- Increased Funding
- Education
- Accessibility
- Parks Encouraging Greater Home Ownership
- More Programming
- Better Connectivity
- Ecological Restoration
- Community Redevelopment
- Sustainability Leadership
- Nature Recreation

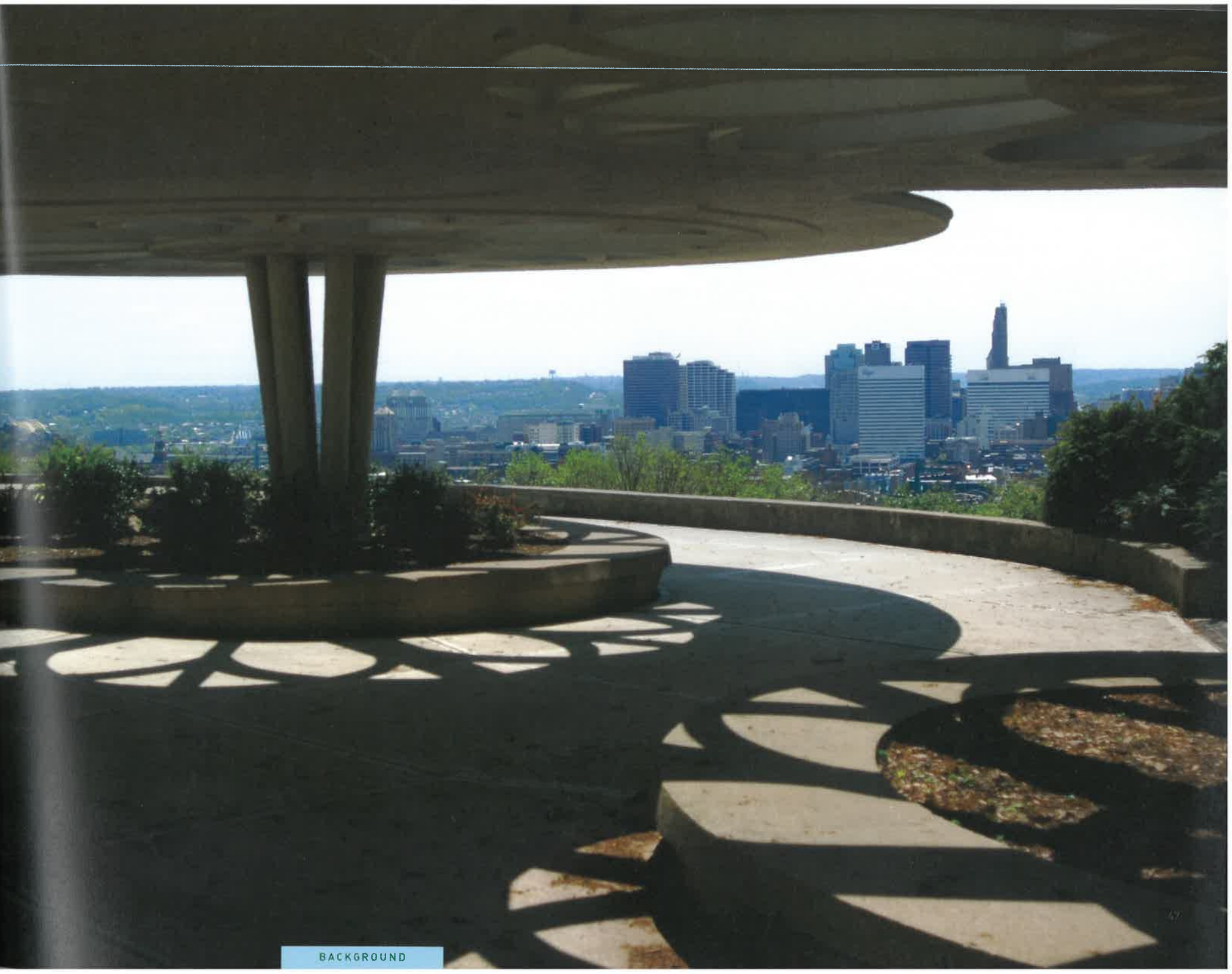
This broad spectrum of input from citizens and supporters throughout the community proved valuable to shaping the Plan. The recommendations attempt to group and address all of these points in ways that best integrate with the Park Board's mission.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

*A considerable amount of research informed the plan's process, dialogue and recommendations. Though much of this information is contained in the companion Technical Report, an overview of findings is essential to understand the reasoning and inspiration behind many of the recommendations.*



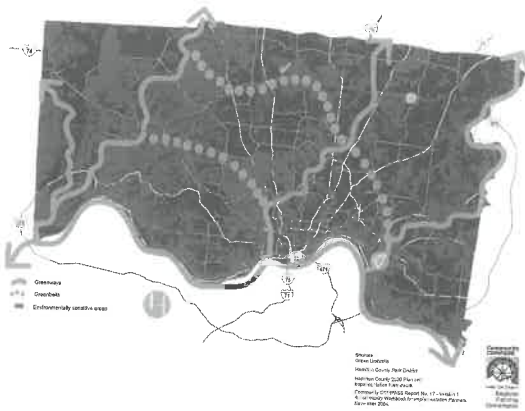
Bellevue Hill Park offers visitors stunning views and a unique shelter.



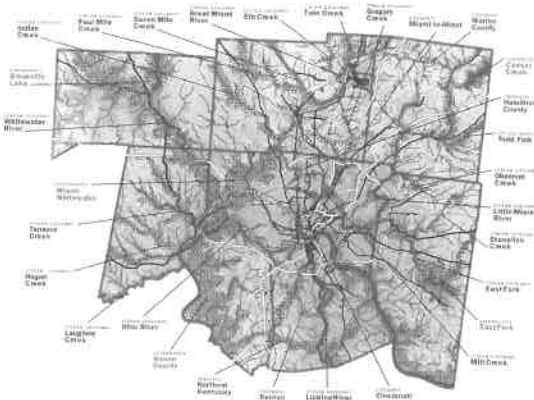
## RELATED PLANS & INITIATIVES

### In the Greater Cincinnati Area

There are many efforts underway in the Greater Cincinnati region that have relevance to the Park Board's Centennial Master Plan. In particular, other public open space plans and connective plans for greenways and trails should be coordinated.



Hamilton County Greenspace Plan



Green Umbrella

### Hamilton County Greenspace Plan

Hamilton County's Plan, besides calling for facility additions and land preservation, speaks to a broader connective framework of greenways and trails across the county. This provides an opportunity for the county and city to collaborate on projects of mutual benefit, building upon partnerships such as those at Fernbank and Armleder Parks, as well as small connective trail segments and property swaps.

Major trail plans along the Ohio River, Little Miami and Mill Creek offer opportunities for collaboration, as do large properties or collections of properties along the edges of city limits.

### Green Umbrella

Even broader than Hamilton County's Plan is a "greenprint" for a connective network across state and county boundaries. Created by regional environmental agencies, it emphasizes major stream corridors and hillside systems.

### Ohio River Way

Another group of regional leaders joined forces to advocate for the Ohio River as the region's spine, outlining a vision of a 150 mile "braided trail" network from Madison to Maysville. The group's early focus is the first major section of trail from Lunken Airport to Downtown Cincinnati. Working with the City Department of Transportation and Engineering (CDOTE) and other city/regional partners, trail planning is progressing. A preferred alignment for this segment is being developed, with final design, engineering and implementation to follow.



Ohio River Way



## Mill Creek Greenway Plan

The Mill Creek Restoration Project continues to lead initiatives focused on enhancing and redeveloping the Mill Creek corridor. Working with other city/regional partners and funding from federal, state and local sources, the Mill Creek plan addresses what will be a long process of rebirth for one of the city's most degraded areas. Ultimately, though, it will be of incredible value to the city's health and viability.



Mill Creek Greenway Plan

## Park Board Natural Resource Plans

The Park Board has undertaken some of the most sophisticated analyses and greenspace initiatives in the region.

For example, Park Board staff have analyzed the tree canopy in each of the city's 52 neighborhoods, compared them against national standards, and created reforestation plans for the 20 most deficient. These are being implemented as funds and partnerships become available and are part of the Park Board's initiatives related to street trees and stormwater management.

The economic value of these initiatives has been calculated using CityGreen software and has helped substantiate the need for increased Urban Forestry and greenspace support for the Park Board.

Park staff also produced an Interstate Greenways Plan that recommends ways of incorporating reforestation and biofiltration into the city's interstate rights-of-way to act as green filters for air and water cleansing.

These enhancements are part of a larger strategy of greening the interstate system, including gateways, public art, civic architecture and view management.

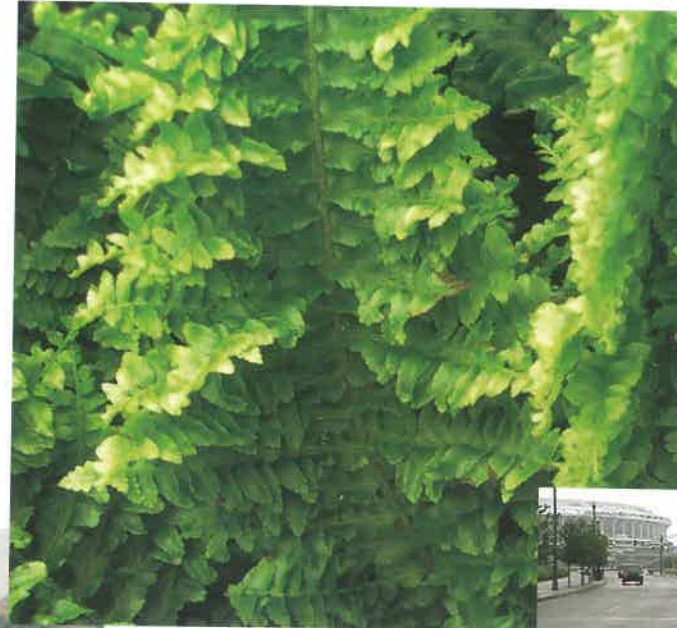
The Park Board has produced and adopted a Management Plan for 2004-2024, with many of these visionary recommendations included, and the Board is working with partners and potential funding sources to implement recommendations in phases.

## OTHER REGIONAL PLANS & INITIATIVES

Many other regional efforts contribute to The Centennial Plan. The Hillside Trust continues to advocate for the regional network of hillside greenbelts, and has developed a new city Scenic Viewshed Study with the City of Cincinnati to protect important public views. Efforts by Little Miami Inc., Rivers Unlimited, Western Wildlife Corridor, Southbank Partners, NKY Vision 2015, Parks Advisory Councils, the Cincinnati Parks Foundation and several adjacent park districts and communities have also contributed to The Centennial Plan.



The view from Eden Park



## DEMOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

The evolving nature of Cincinnati demographics presents both challenges and opportunities. The city has experienced declining population over the decades since 1960, with people moving to the suburban fringes, leaving an urban core that has a low percentage of homeowners and high percentage of people below the poverty level. Recent trends, however, show modest population growth and new, more affluent residents. Years of population loss left the city with a declining tax base and a shrinking public school system. The city's aging infrastructure and housing stock, and crime and social tensions add to the challenges. These challenges, point to a dire need to invest in initiatives that bring people back to the urban core. The core is home to the assets that could not exist anywhere else, such as our cultural institutions and our great civic commons: our parks.

There are also encouraging demographic trends and opportunities. Pockets of revitalization in the urban core are visible, and they are related to parks, cultural institutions and scenic views.

Our city's diversity is blossoming with a balance of African-American and Caucasian residents, and growing Asian and Hispanic populations. These trends point to the opportunity to celebrate our diversity. Parks are places where all are welcome and understanding is promoted through programs, events, and casual interaction.

Finally, two specific target demographic groups hold enormous potential to the future of the city: young professionals and "baby boomers."

Young professionals bring the urge to work hard and creative energy that thrives in dynamic, diverse urban neighborhoods. They seek affordable and inspiring places to live, work and play in close proximity to one another. They are highly likely to appreciate innovative technologies such as wi-fi in parks, and are also likely to support and use alternative transportation including trails and sustainable, healthy environments such as parks and communities near parks.

"Baby Boomers," are at the opposite end of their work life and have accumulated wealth which they are now looking to enjoy and invest. Many new condominium projects thriving in the urban core are being driven by this demographic. They want to be near amenities such as theaters, museums, restaurants, and parks.



## ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT SYSTEM

The Cincinnati Park System is comprised of approximately 5,000 acres, about 10% of the City's land area. There are parks, preserves, greenspaces and gardens distributed throughout the city, and they are connected by a system of parkways and greenways that was started with the 1907 Kessler Plan and expanded following the 1992 Plan. Based upon the acreage and diversity of park holdings as compared to the geographic size and population of Cincinnati, the system is considered to be one of the top urban systems in the country.

Despite this position of strength, gaps must be filled and connective work accomplished. Our urban core/basin area, neighborhoods such as Downtown, Over-the-Rhine, West End, and the Mill Creek Valley, need additional greenspace as does the Madisonville/Oakley area.

Investing in these urban core neighborhoods will help bring people back to the city. Creating a more expansive, connective system that emphasizes our streams and hillsides will not only improve the city's economic and environmental health, it will make parks more accessible to everyone.

The condition of park facilities is generally good, even though the Park Board is the steward of an historic aging park system. A significant percentage of resources must go toward the preservation and periodic restoration of historic buildings, infrastructure, landscapes and public art features.

These features, while requiring on-going care and investment, are key character-defining dimensions of parks and of our city.

As one Steering Committee member aptly said "Cincinnati Parks are the special, unique places in our city. They define us. They feel as if they have always been here and should always be here in the future."





This sentiment is echoed throughout discussions with citizens and advocates alike, but there is a cost. With diminishing resources and staff, the ability to preserve and restore these city treasures, let alone create new ones, is in jeopardy. The Park Board has made tremendous strides upgrading parks throughout the city since the 1992 Plan. The role as steward of our special places is on-going, and the political and financial support to meet these important responsibilities must come with it.

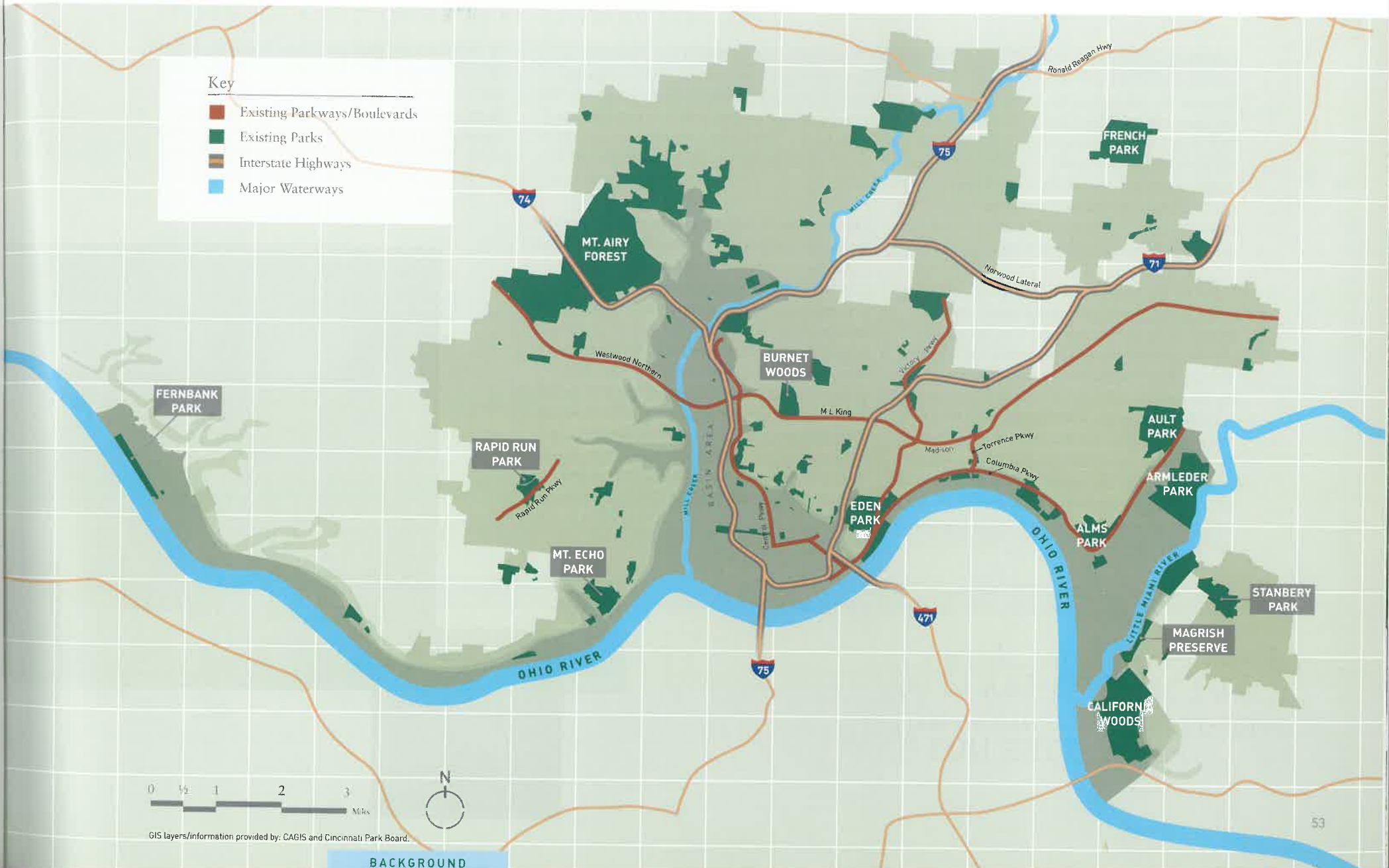
*"The Cincinnati Park System  
is considered to be one of the  
TOP URBAN SYSTEMS  
in the country."*

*"A significant percentage of  
resources must go toward  
PRESERVATION and  
periodic RESTORATION."*

# CURRENT PARKS & PARKWAYS

## Key

-  Existing Parkways/Boulevards
-  Existing Parks
-  Interstate Highways
-  Major Waterways



GIS layers/information provided by: CAGIS and Cincinnati Park Board.

## BENCHMARKING PARK FUNDING NATIONALLY

Cincinnati spends \$166 per resident for park and recreation related expenditures annually, ranking us in the top quarter for major cities across the United States. This figure is based on both Park Board and Recreation Commission spending combined, which is the only way to compare “apples to apples” nationally, given that most city park systems combine parks and recreation. This makes it difficult to sort out the level of Park support per capita compared to other cities.

Spending per resident provides a good indication of the value people and governments place on parks and recreation services. It would appear that Cincinnati’s financial support is well above average when compared to national statistics. It should be noted that though this has historically been the case, as discussed below, none of this city support comes from a dedicated tax stream, so there is no guarantee that this level of support would continue. The amount of acres of parkland per capita indicates that Cincinnati residents are well-served in comparison with other American cities.

Cincinnati has 22.1 acres of park land for every 1,000 residents. The average of US cities is just over 13 acres per 1,000 residents. Cincinnati has about 13.9% of its total land area as park/recreation land, which ranks it fourth among medium density cities in the US. The national average is 11%.

The chart on the following page shows the operating budget funding sources for a number of cities, including those with a dedicated tax to support park and recreation services. Of those with dedicated tax dollars, the average level of support expressed as a percentage of the total operating budget is 42%. Cincinnati Parks, unlike so many other systems, does not have a portion of the general fund dedicated to fund Parks. Cincinnati Parks operating budget is supported with about \$6 million from the general fund. This amounts to approximately 1.8 cents of every City general fund dollar going towards Parks annual operating budget, just over half of Parks all-funds operating budget.

In contrast more than half of the operating budget for Minneapolis (58%), one of America’s best park systems, is supported by a dedicated tax. Seattle has 37% of its total budget from dedicated tax sources. Both cities are considered peer cities.

*“A number of cities...have  
a DEDICATED TAX to  
support park(s)...cincinnati  
parks...DOES NOT.”*



## COMPARISONS WITH OTHER CITIES

### CITIES WITH DEDICATED PARK FUNDING 1999 FY

CITIES	GENERAL FUNDS	%	DEDICATED TAX	%	FEES RETAINED	%	DONATIONS	%	OPERATING BUDGET
<b>High Density</b>									
San Francisco	\$20,757,000	34	\$19,887,000	33	\$20,093,000	33	—	—	\$60,737,000
Los Angeles	22,319,000	23	51,720,000	53	22,190,000	23	1,000,000	1	97,229,000
Chicago	—	—	209,181,000	89	20,196,000	9	4,866,000	2	234,243,000
<b>Medium Density</b>									
Minneapolis	1,162,000	4	18,775,000	58	11,881,000	37	370,000	1	32,188,000
Seattle	26,692,000	44	22,582,000	38	10,748,000	18	152,000	0.25	60,174,000
Pittsburgh	10,560,000	81	620,000	5	1,213,000	9	580,000	4	12,973,000
<b>Low Density</b>									
San Diego	45,942,000	59	26,416,000	34	5,692,000	7	—	—	78,050,000
Kansas City	14,565,000	56	6,267,000	24	5,203,000	19.9	124,000	0.47	26,196,000
Cincinnati	\$8,101,632	84	—	—	\$788,518	8.2	\$754,650	7.8	\$9,644,800
<b>Average</b>	—	38	—	42	—	19	—	1	—

Because none of Cincinnati Parks' operating budget comes from a designated tax, there is no way to know the level of tax support year to year. At times of budget cuts, the Park Board must defend against cuts and newly justify its share of the budget. This makes budget planning and revenue projections difficult.

Most cities also have sources of funds other than general tax and dedicated tax dollars. On average, about 19% of park and recreation operating budgets come from fees collected. Donations are another source of funds. On average, cities receive about 1% of their operating budgets from donations and gifts. Cincinnati Parks generally lag behind other city park and recreation systems in raising revenue from park fees, yet far exceeds other systems in the amount raised privately. The Cincinnati Park system raises about 8% of its operating budget from fees and 8% from donations.

Cincinnati Parks is somewhat limited in its ability to charge fees, being responsible for only the more "passive" programs offered in the city (unlike most city recreation agencies which operate golf courses and other fee-based active programs). The Park Board's high donation levels are due to some long-standing endowments, wisely invested over the years, the community's history of private giving, and Parks Foundation and Park Board success attracting and leveraging private funds. Generally these sources have the ability to grow.

It is unlikely that the city's general fund will be able to support significant increases to the Park Board's budget in the near future, but a modest increase of base city support is necessary for basic park services, and to be able to continue to provide the quality park system Cincinnatians expect and which this plan describes.

The concept of establishing a base level of city tax support for parks, as so many other cities have done is a major finding of the Master Plan's research, and is being proposed as a key strategy for Cincinnati.

A local model for this is the existing dedicated tax for the transit authority in which a percentage of the income tax is dedicated to the Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA). A dedicated/ designated portion of the income tax could also be set aside for park support. The amount should reflect an average funding level of the past few years of tax-based general fund support with a modest increase for additional critical staff and services. This, of course, would not raise taxes, it would simply direct a percentage of the existing tax each year to Park support.

In summary, nationally the most successful park systems have a dedicated funding stream to support operations. A dedicated stream would assure that Cincinnati Parks would not need to spend hundreds of man hours defending their budget every year, freeing staff to pursue revenue generation, fundraising, donations and sponsorships. The result would be increased service for the citizens of Cincinnati and new funding from non-public dollars. A dedicated tax must be approved by the voters of Cincinnati. Cincinnati City Council would need to place this important initiative on the ballot for the voters to decide.

The dedicated funding stream would not be additional tax but would be a portion of the existing city income tax set aside exclusively for Park operations. Parks is requesting 2.69% of each income tax dollar be set aside for its operating costs. The dedicated amount nearly matches what Parks has historically received to operate its world class facilities and programs each year. Parks believe that a covenant between the taxpayers and Cincinnati Parks should be established. That covenant would be a promise from the Park Board that if the taxpayers agree to a dedicated funding stream for Parks then Cincinnati Parks will raise the additional funds to support investment in the future of the park system.

*"The DEDICATED AMOUNT...  
would NOT RAISE TAXES, but simply  
direct a percentage...of the EXISTING TAX."*



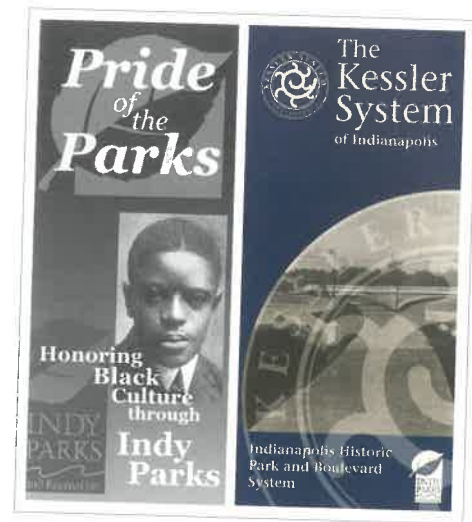
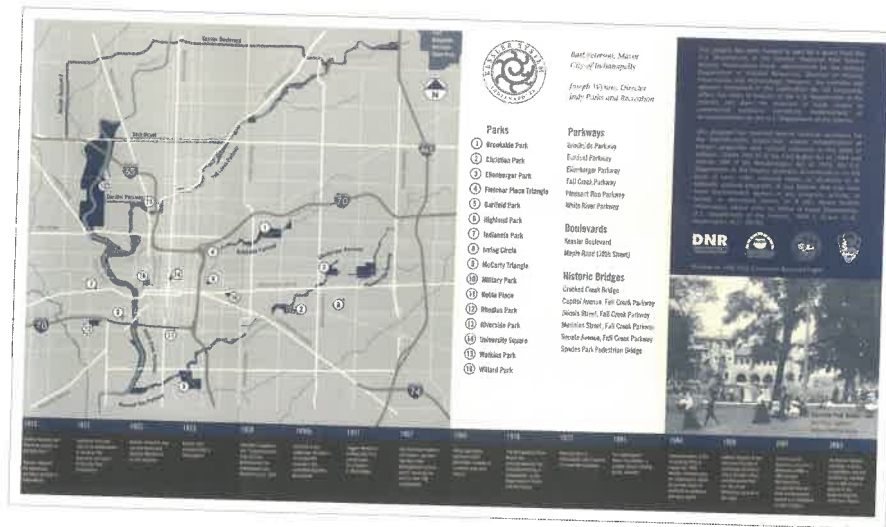
## INITIATIVES OF OTHER CITIES IN THE REGION

Plan research included looking to regional park initiatives such as those in Columbus, Ohio, Indianapolis, Indiana and Louisville, Kentucky. Each of these systems have been working on their trail networks. Cincinnati is well behind regional neighbors when it comes to creating a network of trails to connect our park system.

Indianapolis, Columbus and Louisville have all recently unveiled dramatic plans for regional trails, backing them with the leadership and financial support needed for implementation. Cincinnati lacks the plans and presence of a clear leadership entity for regional trails, although recent efforts to plan the Ohio River Trail have shown unprecedented cooperation and mutual interest.

### Indianapolis

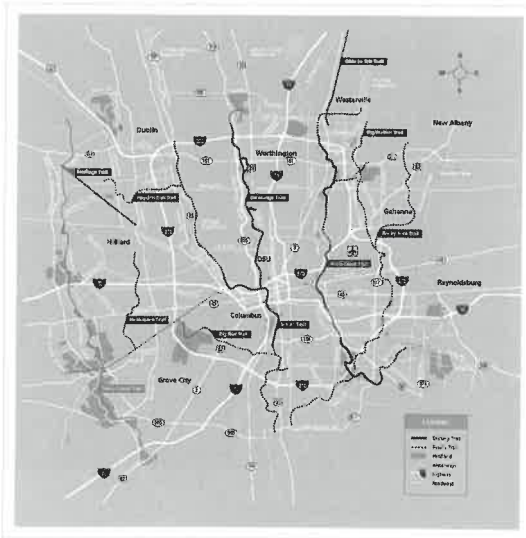
Indianapolis has created a strategy to celebrate the legacy of Kessler's Parkway System and its associated trails, parks and scenic drives. They have also created a unique program to celebrate the city's African-American heritage through parks. Both efforts should be inspiring to Cincinnati.



Indianapolis, Indiana Parks Brochures

## Columbus

Columbus has recently completed a regional trails and related public relations plan that combines several communities and park districts into a network associated with the city's major stream corridors.

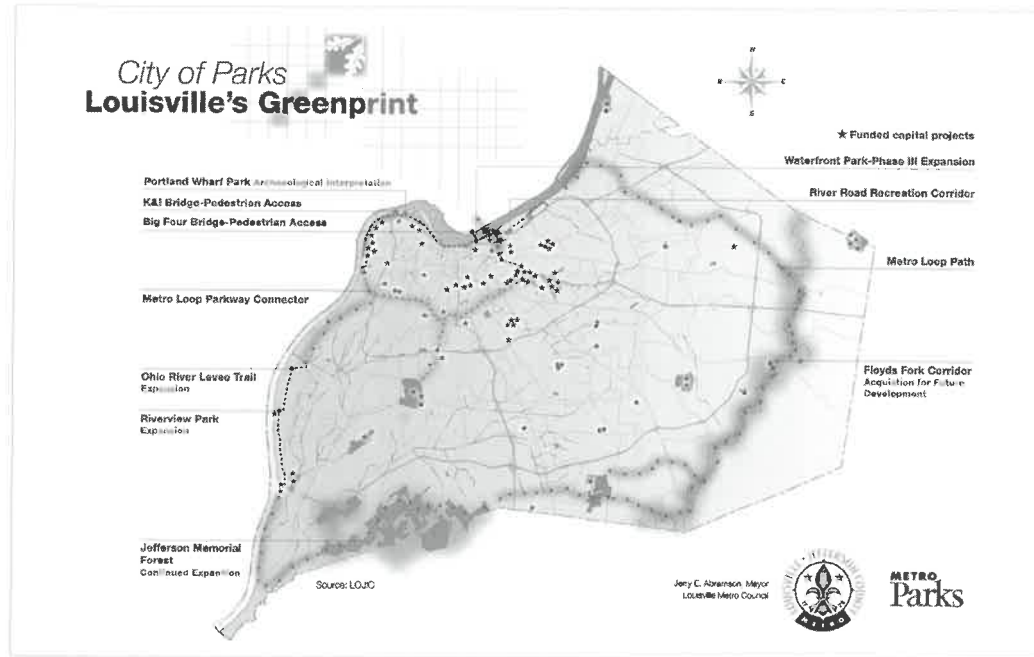


Columbus, Ohio Parks Map

## Louisville

Louisville has recently announced a bold vision for a new 100-mile outer greenbelt and trails network that expands upon the original parks master plan by Olmsted and connects many of the significant open space resources.

A significant amount of money for this effort has come from a major federal appropriation and is being supported locally by a major private campaign led by the founder of Humana and a former state Lt. Governor.



Louisville, Kentucky Parks Map

## Other Major Trail Initiatives

Trail plans are blossoming all over the country, with a major new trail/greenway along an old rail corridor in Atlanta, a system to encircle Manhattan in New York, trails connecting Chicago's lakefront institutions and parks, and systems in Minneapolis, Portland, St. Louis and San Francisco. Trails have also been cited by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources as a major need for Ohio in the future.

### Greenspace, Crime & Learning Disabilities

There is a history of research relating to the impacts of environmental conditions on human behavior, but recently, some groundbreaking work by the Human Environment Research Laboratory at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign made direct correlations between the amount of green in an urban environment and the likelihood of crime, the nature of social interaction and the likelihood of learning disabilities.

This work is particularly intriguing because the research takes place in Midwestern settings and also because of the crime challenges Cincinnati faces.

Essentially, findings indicate that, the greener the neighborhood, the lower the likelihood of crime. Generally, this is attributed to the fact that greener environments are more pleasurable and help reduce the likelihood of early stages of behavior that may lead to crime. Findings also indicate that, the greener the neighborhood, the more likely people are to be friendly to each other.

*“Research points to the  
IMPORTANCE OF  
GREENSPACE and  
parks in fostering a  
safe, healthy city.”*

Equally interesting, because of the environmental stimulus that comes with being near nature, it was also found that children living near parks and natural areas were less likely to develop certain learning disabilities.

This is consistent with new theories and observations about what is now being described as *Nature Deficit Disorder* by Richard Louv.

All of this research points to the importance of greenspace and parks in fostering a safe, enjoyable and healthy city. Rather than seeing parks as luxuries to be afforded if possible, parks should be seen as a key investment in the stability and function of a city—no less important to the health, safety and welfare of citizens than police and fire protection, roads, and sewers.



## Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

A closely related topic to environmental factors affecting human behavior is the study of particular planning/design strategies that can be helpful in preventing crime. CPTED principles have evolved considerably over the last several decades, and it is recommended that the Park Board embrace these on a site-by-site basis as part of their overall planning/design objectives for parks and public open spaces, particularly urban core sites. This is consistent with one of the key initiatives outlined in the plan: *parks are safe havens*.

CPTED addresses issues such as visibility, lighting, entrances, spatial definition, locations and characteristics of structures. These issues are relevant to park sites, particularly given findings that there is a public perception that some parks are unsafe. Despite crime statistics that demonstrate otherwise, if perception is serving as a deterrent to park use, then the Park Board should address this directly with some of these simple principles.

It should also be noted that embracing CPTED was supported by discussions with the Cincinnati Police, and many of their concerns would be diminished if the principles were implemented. The Park Board is working very closely with Cincinnati Police on both long-term and short-term safety issues. Statistics indicate that parks are some of the safest areas of the City. In addition to increased patrols, stings, cameras and other strategic policing methods, the Park Board and Police are also considering a security ambassador program for some urban sites.

Finally, many of the principles in CPTED are also compatible with desirable operations and maintenance objectives. In particular, good visibility near entrances and along pathways is consistent with the objective of having a well-maintained presentation of parks and eliminating one of parks' most invasive non-native plant species, Honeysuckle. This species tends to be one of the most dense and rampant problems when it comes to visibility and ecological health of park sites.



## Sustainability

One of the key initiatives of this plan concerns the idea that *parks are an important part of the sustainable fabric of the city*. This grew out of a strong desire from both the community and park staff to be a regional leader in sustainable practices. The issue of sustainability is taking the world by storm, seeking to address energy, global warming and a myriad of environmental and human health issues through responsible strategies that can transform the global market, cities and individual environments.

At the forefront of this work in America is the US Green Building Council (USGBC), which is working to raise awareness, train and provide tools focused on long-term market transformation. Through their efforts, a “green building” program called Leadership through Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) has been developed to provide a systematic approach and rating system for green projects. The LEED system has been the most widely embraced by public agencies, on the national, state and local level.

The State of Pennsylvania and the City of Chicago are two great examples of public programs that use public money and purchasing initiatives to encourage “green” practices. These efforts, and the efforts of many other governmental agencies, educational institutions, and even major corporations, toward building green, are having a tremendous positive impact on the environment.

The Park Board already carries out many “green” practices which cover everything from using bio-diesel fuels and alternative energy sources, to recycling, reducing mowing areas, and bio-filtration of stormwater, to the greening and replanting of the city. If the Park Board wants to be a regional leader in green building and green practices, it should continue its work and collaborations in these areas and consider embracing the LEED model or other appropriate measures and guidelines. It should also consider developing its own sustainability principles and practices. Opportunities for integrating green buildings, stormwater gardens, alternative energies, local and recycled materials, etc., should be considered and promoted for all Park Board projects.

These strategies also become opportunities to broaden the Park Board’s educational offerings. The University of Cincinnati and the Northern Kentucky Sanitation District are two examples of local pioneers who have embraced green building strategies and educational programs.

Lastly, it is evident that many educational institutions and environmental non-profits around the globe are busy partnering to create educational centers where sustainability can be studied, promoted and resources shared for local benefit. Centers in Portland, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Chesapeake Bay provide excellent examples.



### Cultural Landscapes

The Park Board's vast collection of historic structures and public art pieces is relatively well documented, understood and maintained. The historic landscapes less so. Unique and expressive designs by Adolph Strauch, A.D. Taylor, George Kessler and others are special assets of the Park Board. Over time, these historic landscapes have been modified and, at times, diminished.

The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF) is a national resource for guidelines and support when it comes to documenting, preserving and/or restoring historic landscapes. Working in conjunction with the Ohio Historical Society and local cultural resource consultants, the Park Board should consider adopting TCLF's Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes and making a concerted effort to document these resources as part of each planning/design exercise and as part of the growth of educational offerings, to integrate an understanding and preservation of the unique historic landscapes in parks.

### Public Art

The Park Board is both steward and promoter of public art in Cincinnati, with one of the largest collections in the Midwest. The collection includes traditional, contemporary and community-based artworks in a wide variety of settings, scales and materials.

Caring for, celebrating, and expanding this collection is a high priority for the Park Board. Cities throughout the country offer inspiration for a successful public art program.

Portland, Chicago, Phoenix and Dublin, Ohio offer excellent examples of public art programs from which to learn. The Recreation Commission and the city's Arts Allocation Committee have recently completed extensive research on this topic and made recommendations that could affect public art throughout the city.

The Park Board is in a unique position to partner and contribute significantly to this renewed effort to improve our city's public art. It is likely that some sort of committed use of public funds will be needed, which could also benefit park projects and features.



Gazebo in Eden Park

*“The Park Board is both  
a steward and promoter  
of PUBLIC ART with  
one of the LARGEST  
COLLECTIONS in  
the Midwest.”*

# 3





## A SPECTRUM OF COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

# REALIZING THE VISION

## Strategies for the Future

66	KEY INITIATIVES
84	FUNDING
94	ORGANIZATION & STAFFING
103	OPERATIONS & NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
114	PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
116	<i>Concerts, Programs &amp; Events</i>
117	<i>Sponsorships</i>
118	<i>Krohn Conservatory</i>
120	<i>Program &amp; Event Expansion</i>
121	<i>Nature Education</i>
123	<i>Rentals &amp; Services</i>



## KEY INITIATIVES

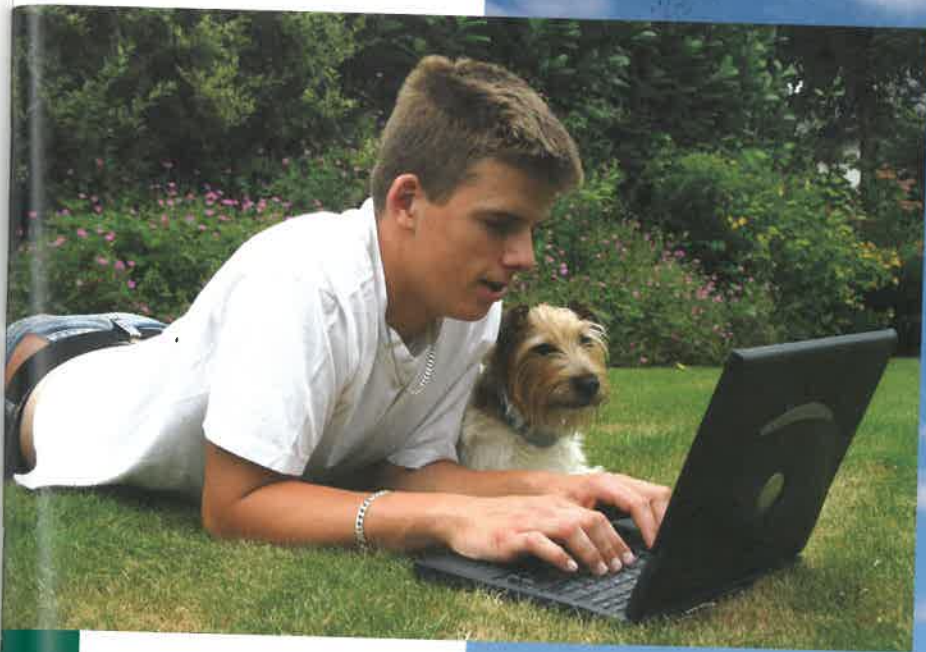
*Realizing the Centennial Plan's vision depends upon a greater variety of community initiatives and funding strategies than the Park Board and City have ever undertaken. Key Initiatives and a strategy for Funding are outlined here as critical ways of achieving the vision. This chapter also addresses staffing and organizational needs, operational needs and strategies, and a strategy to address programs and services.*



### THE ELEVEN KEY INITIATIVES

Research and community input, revealed a number of important observations about how parks add value and contribute to the city. These contributions, refined with Steering Committee input, evolved into eleven *Key Initiatives*. Each initiative includes a series of recommendations focused on partnerships, enhancements and programs/events.

- 1. Economic Development & Neighborhood Revitalization**  
Parks are *Catalysts for Rebirth*
- 2. Environmental Education**  
Parks are *Laboratories / Classrooms*
- 3. Funding**  
Parks are *Revenue-generators*
- 4. Historic Buildings, Public Art & Landscapes**  
Parks are *Galleries*
- 5. Programming & Events**  
Parks are *Community Living Rooms*
- 6. Nature Recreation & Health**  
Parks are *Wellness Centers*
- 7. Public Relations & Marketing**  
Parks are *Tourist Attractions*
- 8. Perception of Safety & Crime**  
Parks are *Safe Havens*
- 9. Staffing & Organizational Structure**  
Parks are *Role Models*
- 10. Reliability, Sustainable Design, Operations & Maintenance**  
Parks are the *Sustainable Fabric of the City*
- 11. Connectivity**  
Parks are *Connectors*



Located on the east lawn of Mt. Storm is The Temple of Love, a structure dating to c.1850.



STRATEGY

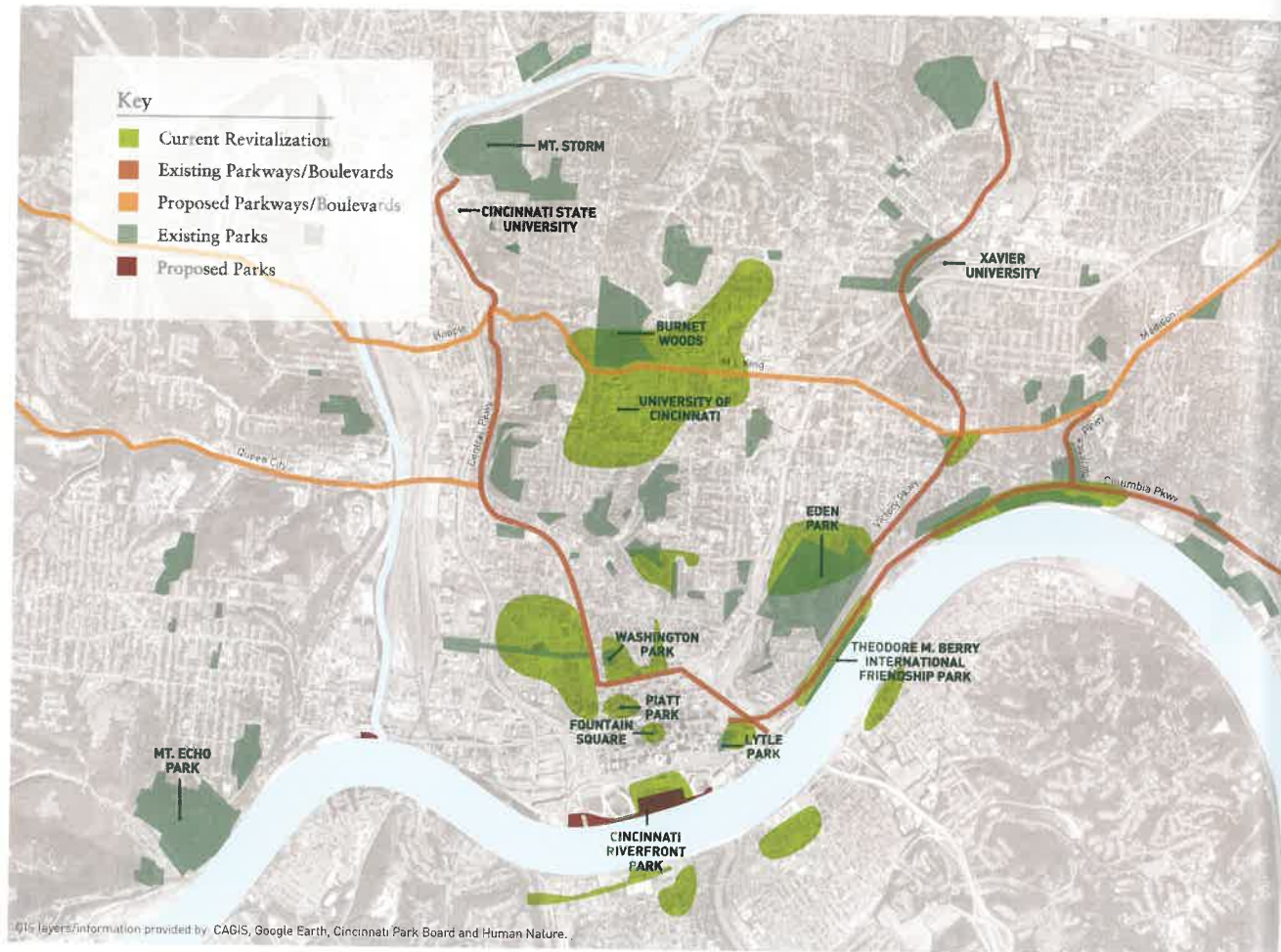
## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

### Parks are Catalysts for Rebirth

In locations throughout the city, there are areas of revitalization. The pattern is revealing, as it is occurring adjacent to parks, parkways, cultural institutions and scenic views.

New developments and reinvestment that have followed upgrades at Piatt Park and Theodore M. Berry International Friendship Park demonstrate this pattern. Other recent projects which demonstrate the importance of parks as catalysts for reinvestment include new residential projects adjacent to Eden Park, Alms Park, Laurel Park and Hopkins Park.

## REVITALIZATION UNDERWAY IN THE URBAN CORE





## Key Recommendations

- › *Develop* a marketing/PR campaign that encourages community leaders to make *significant investments in parks as a cornerstone to revitalize the city.*
- › *Plan for new parks and park amenities that help promote revitalization*, such as community gardens, small parks and civic spaces, as well as trails that connect community assets.
- › Collaborate with *Community Councils* to identify specific needs and opportunities.
- › Work with the City's Community Development Department and private developers to create *development agreements and special improvement districts* to help fund park improvements, operations, programming, and/or maintenance. Use Piatt Park as a model.
- › *Expand* the number of *Park Advisory Councils*, as these are some of the most effective advocacy partnerships in the city.
- › In striving for a balance of revitalization, natural resource conservation and protection of parkland, the Park Board should consider, on a limited basis, *strategic sale of some properties, land swapping, and long-term leases.* The Uptown Parks Plan, in particular, identifies several small, but important opportunities for initial steps in this direction.
- › *Expand partnerships with the development community*, building upon work with 3CDC, Uptown Consortium and such development agreements as at Piatt Park. It is vital to work closely with the designated development team on The Banks and the Cincinnati Riverfront Park. New downtown parks, renovation of Lytle Park, Central Parkway, Washington Park and Uptown Parks are important opportunities.



Piatt Park

“ESTABLISH *development agreements to help fund* PARK IMPROVEMENTS *and MAINTENANCE.*”

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

### Parks are Laboratories & Classrooms

The Cincinnati Park Board has enjoyed a tradition of excellence in nature education for many years. This tradition was refined after the 1992 Plan, when nature education personnel and facilities from the Recreation Commission were consolidated within Parks.

The Centennial Plan recommends expanding the Park Board's role in education, with an emphasis on partnerships, lifelong/intergenerational learning and job training. These efforts better serve the community's desires, and provide opportunities to cultivate the next generation of park stewards and philanthropists.

“CULTIVATE *the next generation of*  
PARK STEWARDS.”

### Key Recommendations

- › Expand partnership efforts with local universities, art institutions, the Zoo, Aquarium, and the Museum Center to engage older students and adults, promoting *lifelong learning* and a related connection with parks.
- › Consider a major *youth training program* for positions ranging from laborer to administrator to engage high school and college students in community service.
- › Consider promoting *parks as laboratories for research* where partnering institutions and public agencies study challenging urban issues of many types (social, economic and environmental).
- › *Broaden and improve nature/environmental education* so it is more widely distributed throughout the community, more directly integrated with a wide variety of curricula, and more visible. Focus not only on traditional programs, but also on arts and cultural programs and environmental and horticultural programs, improved facilities, interpretive signs, public service messages and web-based educational opportunities. Set goals to incrementally reach more children each year through the *Nature Connections* and *Nature Next Door* programs, and expand regional efforts such as the *No Child Left Inside* program. And continue educational outreach programs with communities and civic groups, and program offerings with schools.



## FUNDING

### Parks are Revenue-generators

The Park Board has depended primarily upon public funding sources and has maintained a philosophy of providing almost all facilities and services for free. While this has been successful for many years, it is fiscally well behind other cities in terms of an over-reliance on tax support. A more balanced diet of private funding and greater fees and service revenue is needed. Given the challenged state of public funds in recent decades and the resulting reduction in staff and services, the Park Board must take incremental steps toward expanding its revenue-generating abilities, while providing all citizens equitable access to facilities and services.

Following the example of many other cities and building upon the progress that has been made through the Parks Foundation since its creation in the mid-1990s, this systematic shift appears to provide the best likelihood of a long-term, sustainable fiscal strategy.

### Key Recommendations

- › Engage in an aggressive campaign with broad community support to convince City Leaders that *Parks are a core City service* critical to the economy. Work toward establishing a dedicated portion of the general fund as an on-going base of support for park operations.
- › Develop and implement mechanisms to *increase revenue for parks* (new facilities, more fees, increased rents or institutional surcharges/ payments in lieu of rent, strategic sale of properties, development agreements, special improvement districts, grants, planned giving, etc.), while continuing to provide equitable access to all.
- › *Expand the capacity of the Parks Foundation* to advocate and raise money for capital projects, programs/events, stewardship and operating endowments.
- › *Expand the number of Park Advisory Councils* and empower them to advocate and raise money.
- › *Expand partnerships* with institutions and sister agencies that offer the best opportunities for shared results.



Mt. Echo Park

## HISTORIC BUILDINGS, PUBLIC ART & LANDSCAPES

### Parks are Galleries

The Park Board is steward of an historic park system that, rather than representing the work of one designer or design style, is an expansive “gallery” of landscapes, buildings and public art, dating from the mid-1800s to today. Some of the country’s most famous designers and artists have created works of art that make our system special. This collection requires expertise, care and investment, and can be a more celebrated resource for the Park Board, the city and the region.

*“Document and promote the  
Park Board’s EXTENSIVE  
COLLECTION OF historic  
BUILDINGS AND  
LANDSCAPES.”*



Mt. Storm Park

## Key Recommendations

- › Work with educational and cultural institutions, local experts and advocates, and state and national preservation organizations to *document and promote the Park Board's extensive gallery/collection of historic buildings and landscapes*. Pursue local, state and/or federal historic designation when appropriate.
- › *Consider restoration and/or enhancement of significant historic landscapes* so that they are closer to their original design intent, yet sensitive to contemporary needs.
- › Consider adding staff expertise or outside support to promote and implement *historic landscape stewardship principles*. The Cultural Landscape Foundation and National Park Service are potential resources.
- › Continue to expand efforts to preserve and upgrade important *historical structures and works of public art*.
- › Maximize opportunities to feature *parks as works of art*, and as settings for the display and performance of art.
- › Collaborate with the arts community, Recreation Commission and the City's Arts Allocation Committee to *become a significant part of the local public art strategy*.



Lytle Park



Burnet Woods

*“Preserve and upgrade  
HISTORICAL STRUCTURES  
and works of PUBLIC ART.”*



## PROGRAMMING & EVENTS

### Parks are Community Living Rooms

Cincinnati Parks are some of the region's most beloved and dramatic settings for events. Parks are where communities and neighbors come together to celebrate, play, and be entertained. They are a neighborhood's living room, and everyone's backyard. The gardens, structures, overlooks and other special places throughout the system are available for rental or use in coordination with the Park Board and their facilities management contractor. With diminishing budgets and staff to focus on programming and events in the last several decades, the Park Board has had no choice but to reduce the number of events and the amount of investment in state-of-the-art facilities which provide amenities that current event planners require.

Rebuilding the Park Board's programming and events capacity will help citizens gain more value from their parks through memorable experiences, and provide greater opportunities for partnership-building and revenue-generation.

*“Create SUSTAINABLE  
funding mechanisms for  
PROGRAMS AND  
EVENTS.”*





## Key Recommendations

- › *Seek sponsorships and expand program and event offerings*, with an emphasis on regular daily, weekly and monthly programming to enrich civic life, raise awareness of the value of parks and provide positive settings for social interaction.
- › *Expand staff, private service support and/or partnerships* as necessary to more fully capitalize on parks as venues for programs and events.
- › *Establish endowments*, development agreements and special assessment districts to help engage local partners and *create sustainable funding mechanisms* for programs and events.
- › Use events and programs to *promote diversity* and celebrate a wide variety of cultural experiences that reflect our community's demographic spectrum.



*“Use events to PROMOTE DIVERSITY and CELEBRATE a wide variety of CULTURAL EXPERIENCES.”*

## NATURE RECREATION & HEALTH

### Parks are Wellness Centers

With obesity and heart disease as two of our society's biggest public health challenges, parks play a valuable role in providing places, activities and encouragement to exercise and live healthier lifestyles. While the Park Board is a separate public agency from the Recreation Commission, and their missions are different, parks can provide opportunities for exercise that are compatible with their more passive and educational mission. The natural resources in most park sites provide opportunities for walking, hiking, running, cycling, climbing, leisurely play, and other fun activities.

By nurturing this role and providing facilities, activities and staff to support it, the Park Board strengthens its role in the community. Working with partners to expand the connective network of trails related to natural systems of hillsides and streams, adds even broader benefits, including less vehicular congestion and cleaner air.

*“Collaborate to promote health, fitness and an ACTIVE, dynamic, fun and INSPIRED CITY.”*

### Key Recommendations

- ▶ Consider expanding staff, partnerships, events, facilities and offerings to include more *nature recreation* that is compatible with the Park Board's stewardship and educational missions. Hiking, climbing, disc golf, canoeing, kayaking, dog parks, camping, sailing, cycling, fishing, bird watching, star gazing, biological inventories, geocaching, walking/jogging, cross-country skiing, ice skating and sledding are just some of the nature-oriented recreational opportunities.
- ▶ Collaborate with other regional providers to *promote health, fitness and an active, dynamic, fun and inspired city.*



## PUBLIC RELATIONS & MARKETING

### Parks are Regional Tourist Attractions

The Krohn Conservatory is one of the top attractions in the region. The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, another regional attraction, is in a city park. All major cultural institutions in Cincinnati are located either in or adjacent to a park or parkway. Major events attracting thousands are held in parks throughout the year. The gardens, overlooks, public art, historic buildings and scenic beauty of parks also attract the region's residents and visitors.

Given the funding challenges that lie ahead, parks and the city should celebrate our park assets and partnerships in ways that draw more tourists to the region and provide greater opportunities for one-of-a-kind experiences while they are here.

“CELEBRATE *park assets*  
and *partnerships* to  
help BRING MORE  
TOURISTS *to the region.*”

### Key Recommendations

- › Engage in a campaign with broad community support to convince city leaders that *Parks are a regional attraction and tourist draw*, deserving of financial and promotional support.
- › Strengthen and expand a corps of staff who are trained and dedicated full-time to *Public Relations/Marketing*.
- › Work with the Regional Chamber, Tourism Network, Visitor's and Convention Bureau, and local media partners to *maximize exposure* and support for Parks, park facilities, programs and events.
- › *Collaborate more aggressively* with local/regional entertainment and cultural institutions such as the Cincinnati Zoo, Newport Aquarium, Museum Center, Playhouse and the Cincinnati Art Museum and others to coordinate and deliver mutually beneficial programs, events and promotional strategies.
- › *Refine Parks website* to be more expressive, better linked to partners and more regularly updated with the full range of offerings.
- › *Expand and promote Krohn Conservatory* to enhance it as a regional attraction.



Krohn Conservatory

## PERCEPTION OF SAFETY & CRIME

### Parks are Safe Havens

In recent years our city has been challenged by crime, related press coverage and a perception that some parks are unsafe. Yet according to crime statistics, parks are some of our safest places. Parks are places where people feel welcome, and experience positive impression.

Research by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Human-Environment Research Laboratory indicates that, the greener a community, the less you find crime and the more people are social. There are, of course, exceptions. There are some parks where people feel unsafe, and the Park Board needs to develop strategies to address this.

*"PARKS are some of  
the SAFEST AREAS  
in the city."*



Children greet police on horseback at Theodore M. Berry International Friendship Park.

### Key Recommendations

- › Work with the Cincinnati Police Department to create a public relations strategy that educates citizens about the *safety of parks*.
- › Continue working with Cincinnati Police to increase the *visible police presence* in parks, including development of a security ambassador program, possibly using retired officers and/ or volunteers, as well as alternative policing strategies such as cameras, signs, and other site-specific techniques.
- › Employ *Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)* principles such as vegetation clearing, lighting, defensible space design and visible building entries.
- › Provide updated facilities and promote more programs and events to *increase use and positive activities*.
- › Consider adjusting park hours of operation (seasonally, dusk to dawn, etc.) or gating-off and closing some sectors of parks at the end of the day/dusk.

*“The GREENER a community,  
the LESS CRIME there  
is likely to be.”*



A family hikes through the trails of Mt. Airy.

## STAFFING & ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

### Parks are Role Models

Prompted by diminishing staff and resources in the past several decades, the Park Board has investigated and implemented a variety of strategies to improve efficiency, promote partnerships and improve service. Deep commitment and creativity in this quest earned the organization its reputation as innovators and role models.

Parks has now lost so much staff and funding, however, that any further reductions will not only reduce the ability to innovate, but pose a serious threat to the ability to provide even the most basic services. This is a pivotal crossroads. It is a time to celebrate accomplishments and leverage successes for more support. Through lessons learned, partnerships formed and renewed financial stability, Parks can fulfill its destiny as a role model for other public agencies.

### Key Recommendations

- › Work to *recover staff positions lost* over the past several years and work out *succession planning* for key positions currently occupied by senior staff.
- › *Fill staff needs* in facility management and operations, landscape architecture, graphics, GIS & data entry, construction administration, construction & trail maintenance, program & event support and marketing/PR.
- › Continue to *expand the Parks Foundation's role* as advocate, and fundraiser; fill gaps such as marketing/PR that may be difficult to achieve through normal city structure.
- › Maintain the Cincinnati Park Board, Cincinnati Recreation Commission and Hamilton County Park District as separate entities, due to *clarity and distinction of mission and the cultural, organizational and legal structures*. Continue to expand partnerships and collaboration. This does not preclude consolidation or agency mission changes if and when the city and county merge or otherwise form new ways of providing metropolitan-based services.



Volunteers help plant trees in Mt. Airy Forest.



## RELIABILITY, SUSTAINABLE DESIGN, OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

### Parks are the Sustainable Fabric of the City

Our region lags behind many areas of the country in sustainable strategies for green buildings, stormwater management, habitat protection and restoration, and clean water and clean air. Given the Park Board's role as a major land steward and environmental educator, it is in a unique position to test, promote and lead sustainable strategies throughout the system, in capital enhancements, operations, purchasing and management. The Park Board has already helped craft the Mayor's Green Initiative and has installed alternative energy systems in Eden Park, launched an initiative to use bio-diesel fuels, and has instituted reduced mowing and other operational practices to save energy and be more environmentally sustainable.

### Key Recommendations

- › Be a regional leader in promoting and implementing sustainable practices. *Lead by example.*
- › Consider partnering to create a *Center for Sustainable Cities.*
- › *Establish an endowment and adequate public and private funding* for park maintenance and reliability.
- › Explore converting the Park Board's fleet of automobiles to hybrids or other *alternative fuels*, further explore the use of *alternative energy sources* in its facilities (solar, wind, geothermal), and promote and institute energy conservation.
- › Seek new sustainable collaborations.
- › Be creative and *contextually sensitive* about visual and/or historic impacts of new technologies (cell towers, wind turbines, solar panels, etc.) on parks.
- › Follow *land management practices* for parks that are sustainable and environmentally responsible (reduced mowing, habitat restoration, reforestation, natural stormwater management techniques, etc.).
- › Incrementally budget and integrate into projects more long-term, local and durable materials (ie: natural stone and brick vs. concrete and asphalt). Promote the use of salvaged, recycled, renewable and other locally available materials.

“Seek new  
SUSTAINABLE  
COLLABORATIONS.”

“ESTABLISH *an endowment and adequate public and private* FUNDING FOR PARK MAINTENANCE.”



Solar cells provide some of the energy for the Parks' administration building in Eden Park.



## CONNECTIVITY

### Parks are Connectors

As Kessler pointed out during his first visit to Cincinnati, the city is well-endowed with natural systems and a physical structure of inherent scenic beauty. Our natural system of streams and hillside greenbelts provide the perfect framework for a connected open space system. Working with a wide variety of partners, this connected system can be continually expanded and refined, providing natural habitat and urban cooling, corridors for trails and a framework of green for dramatic views that change with the seasons. Parkways, boulevards, parks and greenways are part of this fabric.

“CONSERVE, *connect and enhance the two primary natural systems*  
HILLSIDES & STREAMS.”



## Key Recommendations

- › Continue to *expand/enhance the parkway and boulevard system*
  - › Conserve, connect and enhance the two primary natural systems—*hillsides & streams*
  - › Play a partnership role in a *regional trails strategy* that forms a single entity/mechanism to plan, design, build and maintain regional trails
  - › Continue connective work on the neighborhood level, *linking people to parks* through parkways, green streets, walkways/trails, gardens, and gateways.
- › Continue piecing together the connective system and develop sustainable management practices, mechanisms and funding with local and regional partners:
    - Ohio River Trail
    - Ohio River Way
    - Green Umbrella
    - Hillside Trust
    - Hamilton County Park District
    - Other City Agencies
    - Mill Creek Restoration Project
    - Little Miami Inc.
    - Western Wildlife Corridor
    - Other Non-Profits & Community Organizations

*“Play a PARTNERSHIP  
role in a regional trails  
STRATEGY.”*



Central Parkway c. 1930

# FUNDING

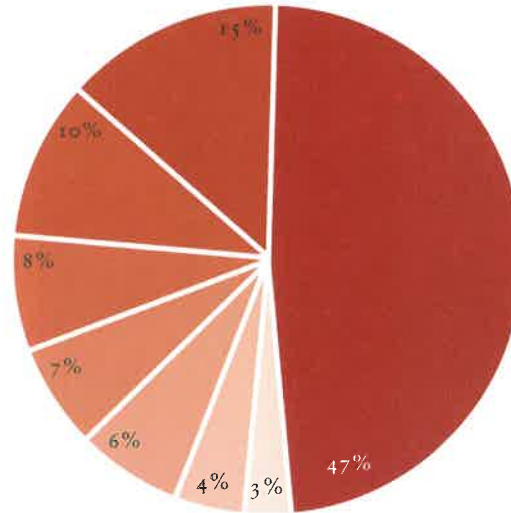
## EXISTING OPERATING BUDGET

A balanced variety of sources fund the nation's best park systems. A healthy mixture of tax dollars, fees, fundraising, partnerships, and volunteerism is necessary for success. Newer cities use revenue systems based on growth, development and innovative tax structures. Unfortunately, Cincinnati has only modest growth and no room for expansion. Many of the newer innovative growth-driven systems are not appropriate for Cincinnati. Examination of successful park systems in older established cities tells us that a constant and dedicated stream of tax revenue, one that can be counted on each year, is necessary for success. Cincinnati Parks must somehow stabilize its sources of tax dollars, which would allow it to concentrate on other revenue generation opportunities.

### Existing Operating & Funding Budgets

Cincinnati Parks operating expenditures from all sources is distributed as indicated on the pie chart. Over half is spent on maintenance, 15% on street trees and 4% on roadway and gateway landscaping. This is about three-fourths of the total budget expended taking care of parks, land, plants, playgrounds, buildings, and basic infrastructure.

The remaining 1/4 of the budget is spent on administration, nature education, events, customer service and operating Krohn Conservatory.



## EXPENDITURES

- 47% | Ground Maintenance
- 15% | Street Trees
- 10% | Krohn Conservatory
- 8% | Administration
- 7% | Facility Maintenance
- 6% | Nature Education
- 4% | Roadway + Gateway Landscaping
- 3% | Customer Service + Events

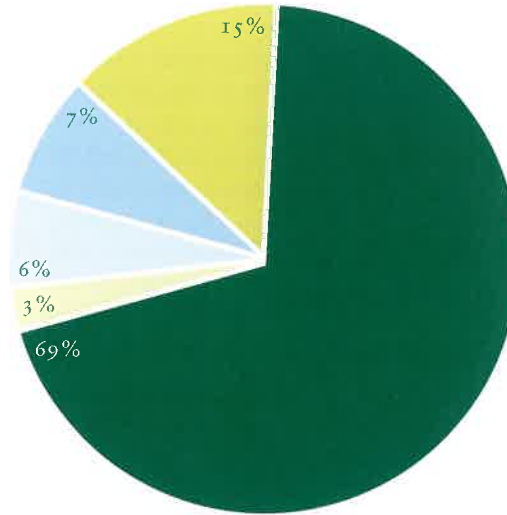


## OPERATING RESOURCES

Operating funds come from a number of sources. Fees generated from permits, outdoor education, Butterfly Show admission and park facility rentals furnish an average of 7% to 8% of the total budget.

A number of wisely managed endowments also supply funding, as do other gifts and donations. These average 6% to 8% of the operating budget.

More than two-thirds of the budget comes from tax revenue through the city's general fund and infrastructure funds. Remaining budget sources are from the street tree assessment, a fee paid by property owners based on street frontage for the care of street trees, and storm water utility fees.



## REVENUE

### Public Funding

- 69% | General & Infrastructure Funds
- 15% | Street Tree Assessment Funds
- 3% | Stormwater Funds

### Private Funds & Earned Revenue

- 7% | Restricted Revenue Funds
- 6% | Grants | Gifts | Endowment Funds

## STABILIZING CITY PARK TAX REVENUE

### Mechanics of Tax Issues

The Cincinnati Park Board has reached a critical financial crossroad and is busy crafting a vision for the next century (The Centennial Master Plan), building upon a rich tradition that earned it a reputation as one of the best urban park systems in America.

With city budgets constantly challenged by population loss and, at best, no real growth in tax revenue, the Park Board has weathered significant staff reductions over the last two decades and time-consuming annual defenses of its relatively small operating budget (1.8 cents out of every tax dollar spent on city services). Parks have reached a point, however, where *any more cuts will compromise the ability to provide even the most basic services—parks that are clean, safe, reliable, green and beautiful*. To move beyond a basic level of service, two things must happen.

First, annual city operating budget support for Parks must stabilize and become something that the Park Board can count on each year, without spending so much time and energy defending it. Once this happens, the Park Board can turn its attention to growing other revenue-generating opportunities.

Cincinnati Parks seeks a committed, reasonable and consistent allocation from the city's annual budget to help maintain and operate its world class park system. One way to accomplish this is to set aside a consistent annual percentage from the present city income tax. *This percentage would not be substantially more than it has been in the past. It would be a set amount the Park Board could count on for effective fiscal planning* and be based on the baseline operating budget Parks needs to provide basic levels of maintenance.

The long-standing dedication of a percentage of income tax to help support SORTA is an existing model. Voters approved this in the 1970s and it continues today. City Parks should have the same type of dedicated tax source to support its operations. This is possible only through voter approval of a referendum changing present City Charter language.

Many park systems across the country are currently funded with a dedicated share of taxes going to park operations. Examples include Minneapolis, Kansas City, Seattle, and Pittsburgh.

It is critical to remember that a yes vote by citizens *would not cause an increase in taxes*; it would simply be a dedication of existing dollars for park operations. The referendum question can be placed on the ballot by a super majority of Council or by citizens' petition drive. Either method allows Council and the citizens of Cincinnati to choose to support their world class park system with votes, and without additional taxes.

Once this happens, City Council would no longer need to debate this every year; they would already have a reasonable dedicated percentage set aside for Parks.

The Park Board would then be able to turn its attention to planning and operating great parks, growing fiscal support through other revenue-generating opportunities and serving as a catalyst for the city's revitalization.





*“Set aside a CONSISTENT  
annual percentage from the  
city income tax.  
An amount that the Park Board  
could count on to do  
effective FISCAL PLANNING.”*



Eden Park

### Convincing Council of Park System Needs for Stabilized Funding

The Cincinnati Park Board and its supporters should approach council members with the idea of a dedicated tax strategy. Council members must be fully informed of the park system needs and why it is critical to dedicate the tax revenue. It is also important to share what's been discovered from peer city experiences regarding dedicated taxes. Parks commitment to raise other revenue must also be clearly communicated. *It is hoped that a super majority of council can be convinced the question is worthy enough to be brought before voters.* Failing to convince council would require a petition drive to bring a referendum issue to the ballot.

### Formation of a Political Action Committee

The mechanics of passing a referendum to revamp the structure of the Charter language regarding income taxes will require a concentrated public campaign. The lion's share of responsibility for passing this referendum falls to dedicated supporters of Cincinnati Parks. In 2006, budget discussions caused the formation of a Political Action Committee (PAC). Placing the dedicated tax issue before voters provides an excellent opportunity for the PAC to get involved and grow.

The PAC would be responsible for finding funds to pay for a survey to measure public opinion on passing such a referendum. If the results are positive, then the PAC should mount a campaign to obtain petition signatures allowing the issue to be placed on the ballot. A petition drive requires a large number of Park Board volunteers to obtain verifiable, valid signatures.

To be successful, the PAC would need to obtain 7,477 valid signatures of registered voters living in the city of Cincinnati. The petitions would then need to be submitted to the Board of Elections for validation. The PAC would bear the cost of obtaining signatures, the actual cost of conducting the election would be paid for by the City of Cincinnati. Once the PAC has successfully placed the issue on the ballot, then the real work would begin. An educational campaign would need to be carefully crafted and then conducted to convince voters of the issue's merit. This would involve a good deal of media coverage, some of which would be free. Paid advertisements and printed information would also be needed.

Careful study of past referendum campaigns is recommended to help form strategy and estimate costs and manpower needs. The commitment required to attempt a referendum vote should not be lightly considered. However, the result could be salvation of the Cincinnati Park system and its plans for the future.



Burnet Woods Lake

## GROWING OTHER REVENUE SOURCES & BROADENING SUPPORT BASE

### Fees

Presently about 8% of park's operating budget is supplied by fees. Nationally, many park systems produce as much as 38% of their operating budgets from fees. Most systems, however, are combined park and recreation agencies, which allows for much more fee opportunity. Parks must be selective about how they generate fees, structuring charges to make them affordable, yet profitable.

Because median family income in Cincinnati is relatively low, it is important to provide mechanisms that allow everyone to participate. No citizen should be left out because of an inability to pay. The Park Board needs to move toward more fee generation, maintaining current practices of keeping park admission free and balancing fee programs and services.



It appears fee income can be grown. With careful and select capital improvements, certain existing businesses such as weddings and corporate rentals can be expanded. Existing programs such as popular Krohn shows can be changed to fee-generating. The Butterfly Show is a sponsored event and has an admission fee. Other seasonal shows can be altered to be self-supporting.

Recommendations to create restaurants, cafes and new concession operations are included elsewhere in this plan. All present new revenue opportunities, with profits used to support operations.

Many park systems use parking fees as major funding sources. Currently, University of Cincinnati student parking in Burnet Wood supplies a modest amount of revenue. As new facilities are built and older facilities are renovated, Parks should explore the feasibility of generating parking revenue.

Particular attention should be paid to the possibility of introducing modest parking fees at new facilities in downtown areas and more densely populated neighborhoods. Locations such as Eden Park should be considered for joint use parking structures to fulfill needs of some institutions located within the park.

Many tenants or institutions located on park property do not pay rent. It is advisable and equitable for them to pay reasonable rents or, for some tenants, a surcharge on fees/admissions they charge their customers. Rent or fees should be based upon the institutions' ability to pay and the value received from Parks. Rent levels/fees should be gradually introduced, starting at a portion of market rate, gradually arriving at full market rate after several years. This would allow the renters/institutions the opportunity to gradually adjust fees and revenue streams as well.

*“The Park Board needs to move toward more FEE GENERATION while maintaining its current practice of KEEPING PARKS FREE.”*



Cincinnati Parks wisely relies on sponsorships to support programs. Sponsorships should be expanded, particularly for those events that naturally lend themselves to this type of support such as performance events, concerts, and festivals.

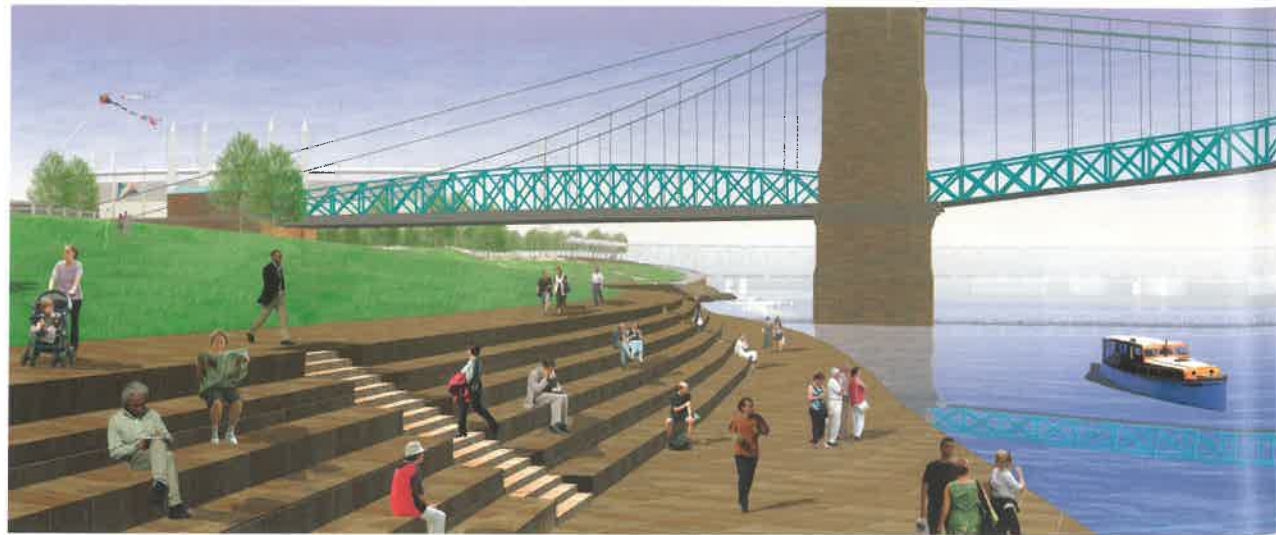
It would seem reasonable for Parks to expand fees and sponsorships through annual incremental increases. The amounts should be determined during the annual performance goal setting process. Park's administration should encourage aggressive, but attainable goals to substantially increase revenue generation in the next five to ten years. Doubling the fee generation portion of the operating budget, from 8% to 16%, seems reasonable. This level is comparable to that of other peer cities.

### Improvement Districts

Many park systems have begun to employ Special Improvement Districts (SID's) to support and fund individual locations or facilities.

New York City's Bryant Park is a classic example. The model consists of a self imposed tax levied on businesses adjacent to parks. Businesses pay a fee, usually based on square footage or front footage which supports security, cleanliness and/or program costs.

These functions are generally administered by a nonprofit corporation. The Park Board should consider this for special locations, specifically the Downtown Riverfront Park. Burnet Woods and Lytle Park may also be appropriate. For this system to work, sites normally must be in densely populated urban areas with many businesses and specialized needs. A local model already exists at Piatt Park, where property owners facing the park pay a fee toward annual maintenance and improvement.



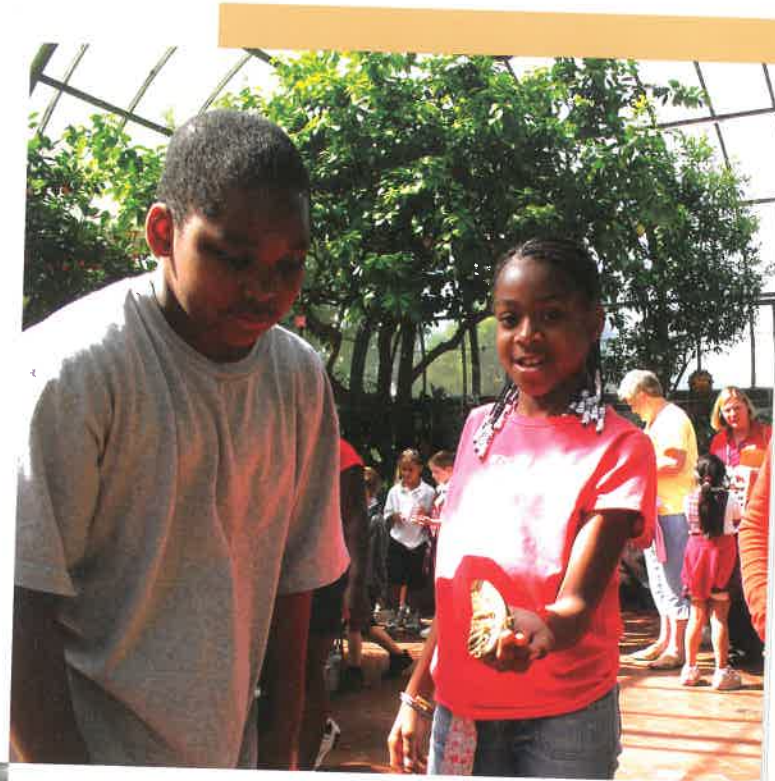
Rendering of Cincinnati Riverfront Park

## Fund Raising

The Park Board currently receives about 8% of its operating budget from endowments and private gifts and grants. Cincinnati is more successful in this area than peer and region cities; most cities average much less. The last master plan may have placed unrealistic goals on how quickly private money could be raised to support operations. But it seems that, with its well connected Board of Trustees and community support, the Parks Foundation has the capacity to increase fundraising. Following careful examination of current targets, new goals should be set to incrementally increase the amounts raised.

Recent fundraising initiatives under the leadership of the Park Director and the Parks Chief Financial Officer have proved successful. However, as more and more effort and responsibility is required to increase fundraising, these two park employees will be hard pressed to manage their limited time. The Foundation should aim to raise enough operating money to hire a full-time professional Executive Director and adequate support staff.

The Foundation recently stepped up emphasis on its annual campaign. The Kessler Fund is critically important to supplying the Foundation's operating funds. Capital campaigns have been successful and continued emphasis should be placed on helping fund bricks and mortar. Finally, the Foundation should concentrate on developing an intensive planned giving program to guarantee major funding for the future.



During the annual Butterfly show at Krohn Conservatory, children get a close look at butterflies.

## Public Relations & Expanding the Foundation Partnerships

The Cincinnati Parks Foundation has a small staff attending to fundraising details and operation of the 501 c.3. It does not have a professional public relations and marketing staff. The Foundation could play a larger role, supplying some important additional services for park initiatives.

Lack of aggressive public relations, marketing and branding initiatives has been noted during various public and steering committee meetings, and in the citizen's survey.

The Foundation could expand its staff and supply these and other critical services and expertise, including graphic design. Park Board administration and Foundation leadership would need to coordinate these functions. It would be efficient to have foundation staff fulfill branding, marketing and public relations functions for both entities.

Cincinnati Parks has a long history of successful partnerships. While the organization is doing an excellent job, future success depends upon aggressively nurturing partners and partnerships, which are only successful when beneficial to both partners.

The Park Board should develop a systematic, holistic strategy to identify and engage new partners. Institutions located on Park property are prime partnership sources.

Playhouse in the Park and the Art Museum, both located in Eden Park, have experimented with and proposed joint initiatives to promote Eden Park as a destination with multiple centers of interest.

This sort of cross marketing and joint partnership serves as an excellent model for other initiatives. Partnerships can be further enhanced with the Zoo, the Museum Center, Newport Aquarium and other entertainment and cultural venues.

Partnerships should also be expanded with non-profits, public agencies, educational institutions, and corporations that have missions similar to Cincinnati Parks. Both new and existing partners provide opportunities for expansion or for entirely new venues.

Current partnerships in the form of lease agreements save city tax dollars. For example, the Hamilton County Park District (HCPD), maintains and operates Fernbank and Armleder Parks, and Xavier University maintains 20 acres of Victory Parkway. Additionally, several maintenance agreements, in which another entity maintains parklands adjacent to its property, are in place with the University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati State, and various developers. These types of agreements should be expanded to other sites and partners, saving tax dollars and capital improvement dollars because the entities invest their money in city park sites in their own, and the public's interest.

*“The future success of  
parks depends on  
AGGRESSIVE NURTURING  
of partners and partnerships.”*





### Volunteers & In-Kind Initiatives

In recent years, the Cincinnati Park Board has enjoyed \$500,000–\$1,000,000 worth of in-kind help annually due to volunteer endeavors.

Help ranged from skilled carpentry work on the Mt. Airy accessible tree house, to volunteers at Krohn and gardening help in public spaces. In 2006, more than 3,700 volunteers donated over 70,000 hours of talent to help Parks provide services.

Some were corporate groups, others were non-profit organizations and many were individuals who believe in the park mission and wanted to support it in a very real way.

The future of volunteers in Cincinnati is strong with survey results indicating that almost 40% hope to volunteer in the parks some time in the future. For people over the age of 50, this amount was 55%.

Managing volunteers is a challenge and staff has expressed the need for a full-time volunteer manager and volunteer relations training.

*“40% of the people surveyed hope to VOLUNTEER IN THE PARKS.”*

The administration recently reorganized, placing staff in positions to coordinate and plan volunteer initiatives within one central division.

Beyond volunteers, other in-kind donations provide important support for parks. Donation of plant materials and garden fixtures for Krohn Shows is one example. Also, the outdoor advertisement industry recently provided space on billboards marketing Parks’ message. All of these kinds of in-kind gifts should be cultivated and expanded throughout the system.

Building partnerships, generating revenue and nurturing volunteers are parts of a bigger initiative best described as capacity-building. These are steps the Park Board must take to overcome financial challenges and to realize the Centennial Plan’s vision.



## ORGANIZATION & STAFFING

### GENERAL ORGANIZATION

The Cincinnati Park Board operates following the direction of a five member policy board as defined and empowered by State of Ohio Revised Code Chapter 1545. The Mayor appoints Board members to serve six year terms, and the Board hires a Director responsible for planning, administration, and day to day operations.

For its separate non-profit Parks Foundation, the Board appoints trustees who are representative of the community's diversity, energy and philanthropic spirit. The organization also has two important advisory components: the Urban Forestry Board and the Parks Advisory Councils. Since the 1992 Plan, and following several years of diminishing budgets and staff, the Park Board has refined its organizational structure to improve efficiencies, combine functions and capitalize on personnel strengths.

Though the current structure is a dramatic improvement minor opportunities for continued refinements still exist.

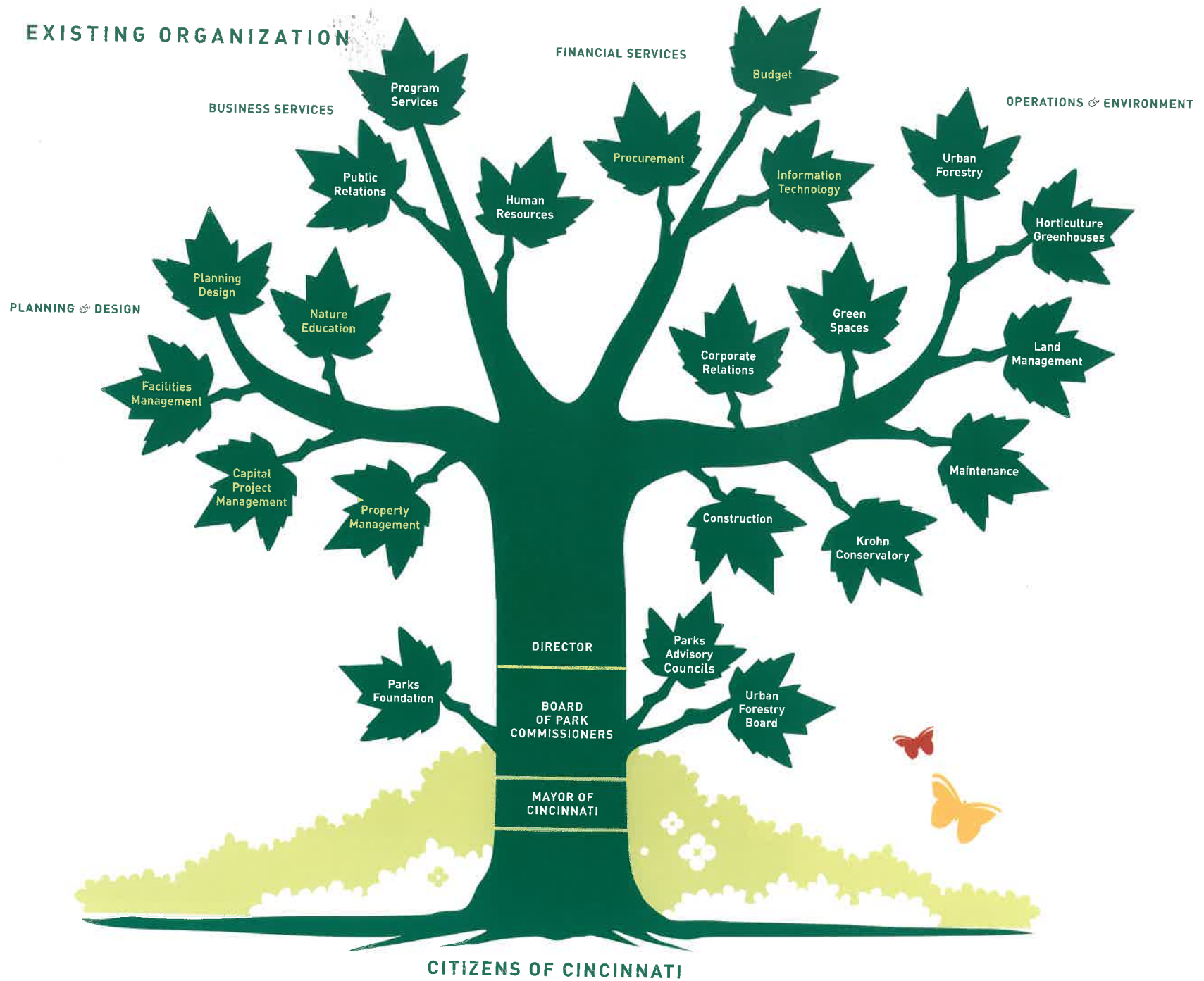
Two Superintendents currently oversee Operations / Land Management and Planning / Design. The Chief Financial Officer handles financial functions, and the Business Services Manager handles Personnel, Public Relations, Permitting and Programming. This structure functions well. However, the organization continues to make refinements to further maximize efficiencies.

### PROGRAMS & BUSINESS SERVICES

Both superintendents have units under them that conduct programs. With added emphasis on the program expansion it would seem logical to investigate the possibility of combining all program functions into one group.

This work unit or division should be run by a seasoned programming person with expertise in fee-based program and events administration. The unit could report directly to the Director; be placed in a new division; or fall under the existing business services section which could oversee programs, business services, finance, procurement, and HR functions. This would streamline and centralize most revenue-generating functions. It would further provide strong central leadership to a function noted in this study as critical for increased revenue generation.

# EXISTING ORGANIZATION



STRATEGY

## OPERATIONS & LAND MANAGEMENT

Various administrative and staff discussions indicate reorganization of the horticultural functions may be advantageous. In the past a supervising horticulturist, oversaw horticultural work. Apparently this benefited technical execution and operational efficiency. Reorganization under the expertise of a supervisory horticulturist should be revisited.

Staff have indicated two major voids in operations, repair and maintenance. First is a special construction crew to repair existing infrastructure. Crew members should have skill sets including equipment operation, masonry and carpentry skills and labor support. Second is the need for a crew dedicated to the construction, maintenance and repair of trails throughout the system. In-house capabilities for smaller projects are critical and represent significant efficiencies and cost savings compared to contract work. No crew currently exists to address these important park needs.

*“The need exists for  
a SPECIAL CONSTRUCTION  
crew for the repair  
of existing infrastructure.”*



Twin Lakes—Eden Park



## PLANNING & DESIGN

Analysis and discussions indicate a number of staffing gaps, especially in light of proposed new parks and initiatives. These gaps can be filled by bringing back a position responsible for supervising the facility maintenance function; adding a Project Manager / Construction Manager; and replacing the Landscape Architect / Project Manager lost in recent years. This last position must be filled by someone adept in CAD and other computer and graphic skills.

*“The FOUNDATION may have the OPPORTUNITY to take on some positions needed by the Park Board.”*

## PARKS FOUNDATION

Much headway has been made in the last few years in the fiscal and administrative functions of the Foundation. This is due, in no small part, to the Park Director and CFO essentially donating time to the Foundation outside of their primary roles.

While this has strengthened the organization and improved coordination with park projects and initiatives, it is unreasonable to expect this double duty to continue. Finding the right person to assume the Foundation’s director role should be a high priority. This position must work closely with and report to the Park Director.

The Foundation may also have an opportunity to take on some positions needed by the Park Board, those unlikely to be supported and funded by the city in challenging fiscal times or through the standard civil service process. This requires careful analysis, particularly relating to functions directly related to the Foundation’s primary purposes of advocacy and fundraising.



Meyer Garden



## ADDITION OF CRITICAL SKILL SETS

Park Board staff have done a good job filling voids due to staff reductions. However loss of certain positions has created gaps which cannot be completely managed by stretched and over-extended staff. In many cases, lack of time and/or expertise mean functions go unfulfilled despite best efforts. The need for additional skill sets and expertise was repeatedly cited during public and steering committee meetings and in discussions with staff. The following are skill sets mentioned most often.

*“Given the nature of managing an aging infrastructure requires an EXPERIENCED facilities MAINTENANCE PROFESSIONAL.”*

### Public Relations & Marketing Function

The Park Board does not have a dedicated PR and Marketing person. These duties are presently completed using a contract marketing firm with limited hours and supplemented with Park staff as necessary.

General consensus from staff, steering committee and administration seemed to be that a full-time Public Relations person should be added to assure Parks’ branding, programs and functions receive proper media exposure and promotion. Also discussed was the possibility of the Foundation hiring a marketing person to serve both its and the Park Board’s needs.

### Supervisor of Facility Maintenance Function

In managing an aging infrastructure and balancing contract and staff services, the Planning / Design Division requires the expert skills of an experienced facilities maintenance professional. The individual would be called upon to plan and execute preventive maintenance programs and functions that help improve sustainability and the physical conditions of all Park Board facilities.



### Naturalist Function

Positions should be considered to augment staff at Krohn and adequately address inner-city nature program needs and expanded initiatives.

### Exhibit Designer | Manager Function

This position would create interpretive displays at Nature Centers and be responsible for coordinating or creating special exhibits at Krohn. The position could be supported by the special construction crew in Operations / Land Management mentioned previously.



Krohn Conservatory

### Landscape Architect | Project Manager Function

During budget reductions several years ago, the landscape architect position was eliminated. This has negatively impacted the Park Planning / Design function. The Landscape Architect / Project Manager was needed to manage a range of planning and construction projects. For the most critical landscape design issues, a contract LA who is paid for work under contracts, is often called upon to complete work. This method works to a point, but day-to-day landscape issues go unresolved or are handled without the benefit of this expert professional opinion. Parks has traditionally had an in-house Landscape Architect to make important design decisions and offer support and technical expertise for operations and maintenance staff.

The Park Board's Landscape Architect has commonly been the only one in all of city staff, and has provided input to other city departments seeking expertise on issues too small for a contract.

### Archivist | Curator | Historic Preservation Function

In light of Cincinnati Parks significant planning/ design history, and its incredible collection of historic buildings, landscapes and public art, and variety of archival materials currently managed, an archivist position should be created and potentially staffed by volunteers. These volunteers, with appropriate supervision, could lead documentation projects, data entry, exhibits, tours, lectures and coordination efforts with other local institutions such as the Museum Center, Hamilton County Public Library and Cincinnati Preservation Association.

Analysis and exploration of staff issues showed a number of key positions held by people close to retirement.

Because of their experience, institutional memory and vital roles in the organization, it is imperative that Park Board administration identify and plan a smooth transition for these positions within the next five to ten years.

*“Promote a culture  
of LEARNING  
and INNOVATION.”*

### Training & Innovation

This plan includes several references to the Park Board serving as a role model for other public agencies. Citizens who participated in the planning process offered recommendations in this area. To live up to these expectations, the Park Board must continue efforts to explore new ground, both internally and externally. One of the best ways to do this is to *promote a culture of learning and innovation*. By requiring and encouraging on-going staff training, setting continual goals for improvement, and rewarding those who set new standards of achievement and innovation, the Park Board will *lead by example*. There is no better way to serve as a role model.

Some recommendations for staff additions come with the provision that existing staff also need to aggressively pursue training to improve their individual skills, division performance, and overall service level.

Technological advances, promoting parks as research opportunities, sustainable design & operations, public relations & marketing, partnerships and volunteers are all areas where investments in staff training will pay long-term dividends.

Parks has made significant efforts exploring new uses of technology to enhance efficiencies and conserve resources. This has reduced costs and extended staff capacities. Growth in corporate volunteer work days and overall volunteer use has also greatly extended the reach of staff and financial resources. It is important to keep up these kinds of initiatives including use of GPS units on vehicles to track routes and efficiency, resource mapping through GIS, the introduction of “smart” trash compactors, and the introduction of alternative fuel and energy sources.

Finally, as part of an expanded public relations and marketing focus, the Director and key staff should focus on promoting Cincinnati Parks outside the region. The Park Board is a national leader, and has formed new international relationships as well. Our parks should be celebrated and promoted at conferences around the world, and our leaders should be out learning about other national models and nurturing key partnerships. Not only will expanded press about the Park Board's successes help reinforce the system's value at home, it will open new doors for funding, research and innovative projects.

The friendship gardens with our sister cities in Munich and Liuzhou are two excellent examples already in action. Also, this past year, key staff on the planning team visited park funding and design pioneers in Chicago and New York, adding another link to the web of key national relationships. Such efforts are vital to a culture of learning and innovation and to the future success of Cincinnati Parks.



Above: Munich Garden

Left: Liuzhou Garden Concept



## OPERATIONS & NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The Cincinnati Park Board's Operations and Natural Resource Management Division is responsible for a wide variety of activities and services, including maintenance, volunteer coordination, land management, urban forestry, horticulture and Krohn.

The public urban forest has a direct value to taxpayers providing over \$20 million in annual benefits through reductions of pollution, stormwater runoff and energy costs. The division plants and maintains 5,000 acres of park forests, 80,000 trees along 1,000 miles of streets, 220 acres of highway and greenway property, and over 65 miles of trails. And it provides 24 hour emergency tree services.

Operations & Land Management is also responsible for roadway and gateway landscapes, coordination of volunteer efforts and corporate relations, and the basics of park and park facility maintenance, and trail and habitat maintenance. Staffing and funding recommendations appear elsewhere in this plan. However it is important to note that basic, on-going costs to sustain the park system must be appropriately funded.



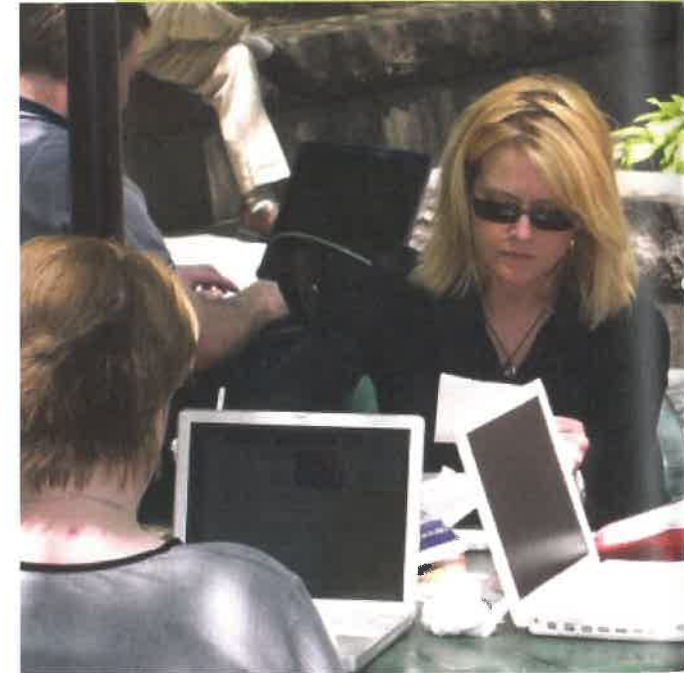
A crowd of volunteers

In 2004, Parks developed a 20 year plan for resource management, which is a companion document to the Centennial Plan and covers all dimensions of resource management, services and responsibilities. The management plan is intended to build upon the vision started in the 1992 Park Master Plan, expand and refine the 2000 Natural Resources Study, and compliment the initiatives outlined in this plan.

The goals outlined in the management plan are bold, environmentally sound, and scientifically proven. Meeting them requires broad based support from a myriad of public and private sources. Research supporting plan goals was developed through a systematic process led by the Urban Forestry Advisory Board, and identified in the 1998 Transitional Urban Forest Management Plan. Key findings and components of the 20 year plan are summarized in this plan.

Recent re-engineering of operations culminated in a refined districting strategy for parks and facilities throughout the City and a related structure of assignments and responsibilities.

*“Continue IMPROVEMENTS  
in customer SERVICE,  
efficiency, SUSTAINABILITY,  
facilities, personnel  
and equipment.”*



Wi-fi at downtown's Piatt Park.

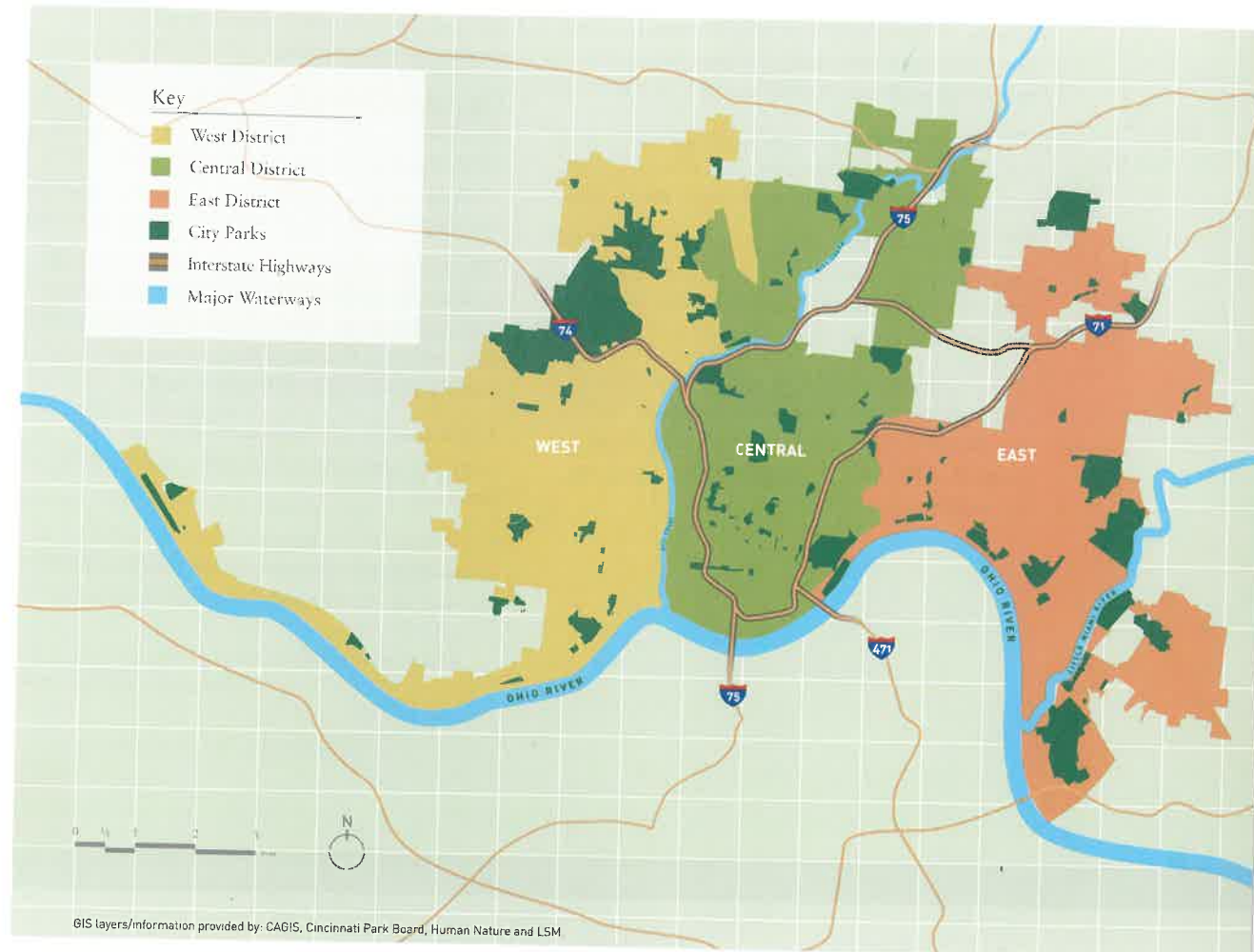
## GEOGRAPHIC DISTRICTS

The System has been divided into three districts that naturally follow the city's geographic structure and facility distribution pattern.

*The West District* is generally defined by the city boundary on the west and by the Mill Creek on the east. This includes early western suburbs. Mt. Airy and Mt. Echo are major parks in this district.

*The Central District* is defined by the Mill Creek on the west and by neighborhood boundaries and I-71 on the east. This is the urban core. Parks along the Riverfront, Downtown and Uptown, and Eden Park are within this district.

*The East District* is defined by neighborhood boundaries and I-71 on the west and by the city boundary/Little Miami River on the east. This includes early eastern suburbs. Ault, Alms, Armleder and French parks are in this district.



## KEY FINDINGS OF NATURAL RESOURCES 2000 STUDY

- › Twenty of Cincinnati's 52 neighborhoods do not meet minimum tree canopy criteria for environmentally healthy communities.
- › The current 6-year preventive maintenance cycle for all street trees is the most cost effective cycle and reduces service requests by 85% the following year.
- › Approximately 2,000 of 5,000 acres of park property are covered by exotic honeysuckle that has replaced native vegetation.
- › Twelve percent of the area of Cincinnati's central business district (CBD) is covered by surface parking lots. Over 1,000 new trees could be planted in the CBD by implementing a parking lot beautification program.
- › An updated emergency plan is in place in the event of a major storm.
- › The regional urban forest is at risk due to the presence of new and existing exotic pests. Increased vigilance is necessary through staff training, public awareness, pheromone trapping, and mapping of tree removals to reveal patterns.
- › The deer population has exceeded the carrying capacity of the park system. An infrared study indicates that the system has 86 deer per square mile, which is five times the recommended standard of 15-20 deer per square mile.
- › Approximately 1,000 dead or hazardous park trees may threaten public safety and must be removed.
- › Only three of five regional and city highway gateways are landscaped. Plans must be implemented for the I-74 and I-75 city entrances.







## Key Goals of the 2000 Plan

*Plant* 3,500 new street trees in 20 targeted neighborhoods.

*Replace* every tree that is removed within one year.

*Plant* 3,000 street trees in non-targeted neighborhoods.

*Plant* 7,000 “Releaf” trees.

*Raise* at least \$25,000 each year through grants and fundraising to implement planting.

*Implement* a parking lot beautification program.

*Respond* to all storm emergencies within two hours.

*Maintain* all street trees on a six-year preventive maintenance cycle.

*Resolve* non-emergency service requests within 45 days.

*Perform* all tree maintenance to ANSI and NAA professional standards.

*Maintain* the trees in the central business district on a five-year maintenance cycle.

*Inspect* and *replace* dead, poor or missing Central Business District (CBD) trees twice each year.

*Mulch* all CBD street trees that do not have tree grates twice each year.

*Update* the emergency response plan each January.

*Recycle* 10% of all logs into lumber for public sale.

*Maintain* 60% of park areas in a natural state and 40% as developed.

*Clear* 100 acres of honeysuckle each year and replace it with desirable species.

*Inspect* high-use park areas each winter and remove hazardous trees by April.

*Clear* views at designated parks in designated view corridors annually.

*Develop* remaining city gateways at I-74 & I-71.

*Plant* 1,000 new park trees each year.

*Maintain* 15 miles of park trails each year.

*Mow* greenspace areas an average of 28 times each year.

*Waste collect* all greenspace areas weekly.

*Plant* three seasonal displays in the Fort Washington Way planters.

*Adopt* one new greenspace area each year.

*Develop* one landscape plan for new roadway opportunities annually.

## STREET TREE PROGRAM URBAN FORESTRY

The Urban Forestry program is a front line service provider, responding to citizen inquiries about public trees, storm emergencies, utility management, and providing comprehensive arboricultural services to public trees for citizens and city agencies.

The Urban Forestry Program is guided by a nine person, City Manager-appointed Board that advises the Park Director on policy, citizen appeals, and financial matters. The Board is comprised of a mix of city department representatives, community leaders, and green agency professionals.

The program is funded by a special front foot assessment that is levied by the County, based upon the amount of property frontage on public streets. The assessment rate is determined annually by City Council.

### Planting

Planting new trees along Cincinnati streets maximizes the environmental, economic, and aesthetic benefits provided by a healthy urban forest. Trees are selected, located and planted based upon their long-term requirements and potential costs and benefits associated with maintenance for their expected lifespan.

In spite of more than 20 years of street tree planting, a 2001 tree canopy study found that 20 of Cincinnati's 52 communities do not meet tree canopy coverage goals as recommended by American Forests, Inc. To address this deficit, the program has created reforestation plans for these 20 communities that, if implemented, will result in the planting of 3,500 new trees and will result in the attainment of canopy coverage goals by 2024.

Planting and maintaining trees in high density commercial areas, such as the Central Business District (CBD) presents challenges.

*“Reforestation plans will  
result in the PLANTING  
of 3,500 NEW TREES.”*



## TREE CANOPY COVERAGE

A 1993 CBD plan addresses this issue by increasing species diversity, reinforcing major traffic corridors, selecting functionally appropriate species, and improving aesthetics. A 2002 parking lot study found that 12% of the CBD is covered by surface parking lots.

The plan identified a measurable system that could be integrated with the city's zoning code. It would require parking lot owners to beautify their property, and implementation would result in the CBD meeting tree canopy standards. However, this was not incorporated in the new zoning code adopted in 2004.

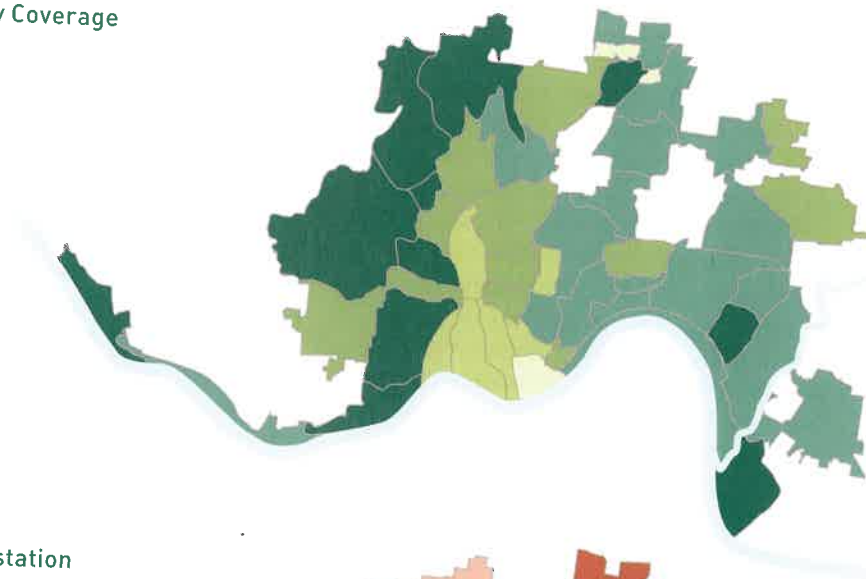
### Recommendations

Implement recommendations outlined in the Park Board's Natural Resource Management Plan for 2004-2024.

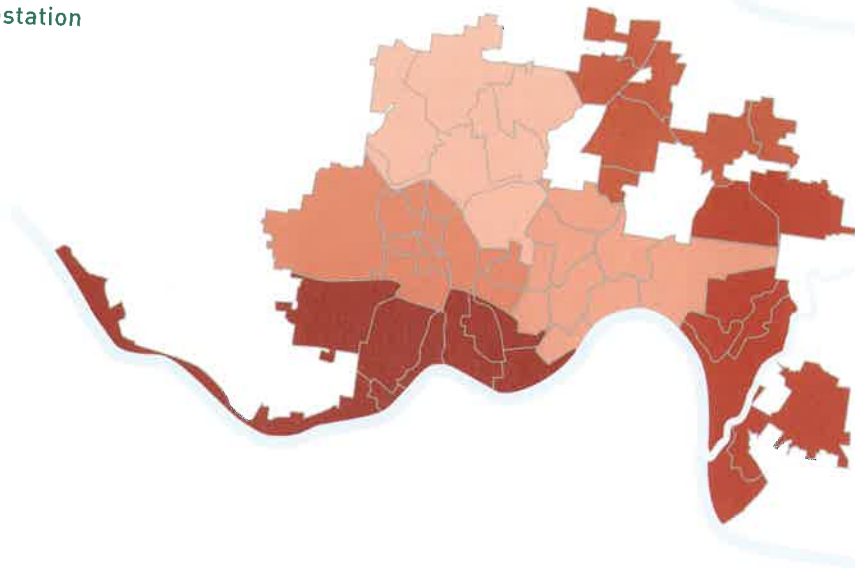
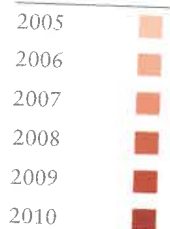
With MSD and other partners, expand collaboration and revenue from street trees and stormwater best management practices that benefit the entire city, watersheds and/or neighborhoods.

Work with ODOT, CDOTE and other partners to integrate reforestation and biofiltration strategies for the new I-75 corridor enhancements, and future interstate projects.

### Existing Tree Canopy Coverage By Neighborhood



### Neighborhood Reforestation Phasing Strategy



## LAND MANAGEMENT & FACILITY MANAGEMENT

Land Management Plans have been developed to guide the maintenance, management and improvement of park properties. Management plans range from the treatment of highly developed areas, to preserves and natural areas, and cover such elements as mowing frequency, litter control, floral bed treatment, tree care, development/infrastructure placement patterns, and habitat enhancement. Though land management plans focus on the overall management and operation of parklands, an essential element is the upkeep, cleaning and maintenance of buildings, shelters and grounds, and playgrounds, picnic areas, performance spaces, overlooks, art and special features and infrastructure.

An overall goal of the park system is to maintain a balance of developed and undeveloped park land with 60% held in a “natural” state and 40% “developed” with park facilities and their supporting infrastructure of roads, walks and steps.

### Natural Areas & Preserves

Natural Areas, Preserves and Forest Areas have management plans tailored to the needs of these resources. Our nature centers and preserves include some of the best forested habitats in our system. These should be cared for in much the same manner as described under *Forest Management*. This involves the removal of hazardous trees, invasive removal, and re-planting with native species that are likely to be found there.

These preserves should be on a three-year cycle for the removal of honeysuckle. This will reduce the amount of re-seeding of the shrub and help achieve an acceptable maintenance cycle by the end of the first ten year period. Other invasives, such as garlic mustard and wintercreeper will need to be dealt with yearly until a maintenance cycle is achieved.



### Forest Management

The primary emphasis on management of park trees must be the immediate removal and prevention of hazardous conditions. High use areas are inspected on a regular basis.

In addition to controlling hazards, routine inspection and appropriate response can maintain tree vigor, reduce insect infestations, and minimize damage from insects, disease, and construction near root systems.

Park tree crews annually remove about 800 trees, prune 600, and respond to approximately four weeks of storm emergency correction. Contracted crews supplement this by removing an additional 100 hazardous trees each year. In spite of this work, there is not enough funding or staff to address the total annual need. In mid-2004 there were 1,000 standing dead or hazardous trees.

### Invasive Honeysuckle Management

Exotic bush honeysuckle can rapidly invade and overtake a site, forming a dense shrub layer that crowds and shades out native plant species. Mechanical and chemical methods are the primary means of control of exotic bush honeysuckle.

No biological control agents are currently available for these plants and any potential agents that might be considered would have to be specific to the exotic species. Prescribed burning has shown some promise for exotic honeysuckle growing in open habitats.

Honeysuckle management should be focused on the priority parks first but if resources are available for low priority parks, that work should proceed too. The total cost of honeysuckle management over the first ten-year planning period is \$2.8 million.

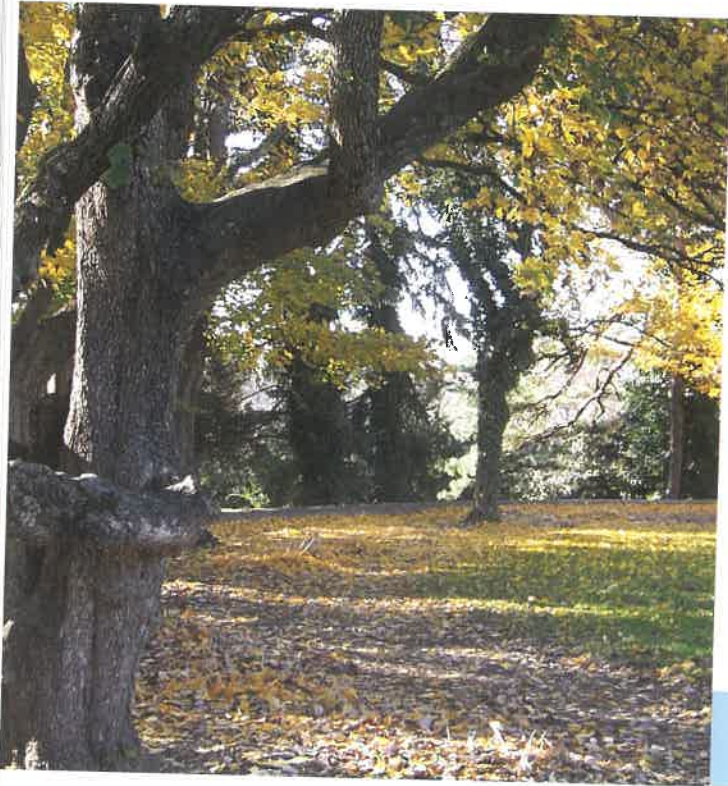
### Deer Management

By the early 1900s, due to habitat loss and unregulated hunting, the deer herd in Ohio had nearly been decimated. Since then deer have moved in from other states, and have been restocked by the Division of Wildlife (DOW). The program was a success and deer are now found in every Ohio county. However, large predators that kept the herd from over populating are no longer present in Hamilton County.

The DOW uses regulated hunting to manage the size of the herd statewide. Gun hunting is illegal in Cincinnati, and in parts of Hamilton County hunting is not possible due to lack of space and safety concerns. This has helped allow the local population to grow unchecked. In 1995 Park staff began to recognize some negative impacts caused by the deer population. The Cincinnati Park Board and the Hamilton County Park District partnered to monitor the population, educate the public, and develop regional management strategies. Both organizations have consulted with the DOW as the guiding agency.



Infrared technology, considered the most accurate means of counting deer, was used in some parks. Deer density was shown to be above the recommended density of 15/20 per square mile. Overall, parks surveyed showed a density of 86 deer per square mile. A Deer Management Plan was completed, and culling started at designated sites in early 2007.



### Habitat Management

Habitat management or enhancement areas are chosen using several criteria. These include the present quality of the habitat, rarity/importance of habitat type, soil types, as well as financial, environmental and aesthetic reasons. High quality habitats include the mature forests of California Woods, and Ault Park. Rare/important habitats include wetlands such as those found in Kennedy Heights and McEvoy Parks.

Financial and environmental reasons drive the designation of some areas as meadow or no-mow areas. Benefits include reducing fuel consumption and pollution, and easing mowing responsibilities, which saves money. Some of these areas have been enhanced with prairie species to add beauty and help with public perception. French Park and Mt. Airy plantings are good examples of this practice.



Land management practices for most areas include assessment, invasive removal, herbicide applications, native plant replacement and maintenance.

Maintenance involves keeping invasives from re-colonizing, and preventing the new plantings from being covered with vines. Volunteers, advisory councils, Scouts and other partners support staff and contract labor work in these areas.

*“Interstate highway  
Parkways will have a  
combination of formal and  
NATURAL REQUIREMENTS,  
with emphasis on plants that  
provide BIOFILTRATION.”*



### Parkways and Greenways

There are two basic types of parkway treatments. Central Parkway and Victory Parkway are more formal landscapes and are maintained as tree-lined boulevards, either with green medians and/or wide tree lawns. Grass areas are managed as simple continuous ribbons of green with double rows of trees where space permits. No signs are allowed within parkway space and curb cuts are minimized.

The less formal landscape treatments apply to Columbia Parkway and Torrence Parkway, for example, in which the parkways are bordered by wooded and heavily vegetated edges. Along Columbia Parkway, view corridors are maintained while much of the rest of the vegetated hillside is managed as a natural area.

In the future, as new types of parkways are added to the system, additional typologies and management strategies will need to be developed to address the unique needs of each type. Stream and Hillside Greenways will have more of a native, ecological philosophy.

The Stream Greenways will have flooding and erosion as considerations, where Hillside Greenways will need to address view management and hillside instability. Interstate Parkways will have a combination of formal and natural requirements, with a unique emphasis on plants that provide biofiltration benefits to cleanse both air and water (stormwater run-off).



## PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Although funding and staff reductions have adversely affected the number of programs provided, the Cincinnati Park Board continues to offer a wide range of options that complement its mission.

A desire for additional programs and services came through loud and clear in every community meeting and survey. The people of Cincinnati enjoy events and programs that take advantage of our scenic parks and they want more. In addition to creating a more dynamic and expressive civic realm, events and programs add value and help attract and retain residents and businesses.

The Plan recommends that three demographic groups in particular (minorities, young professionals and seniors) should be given greater focus related to park facilities, programs and services.

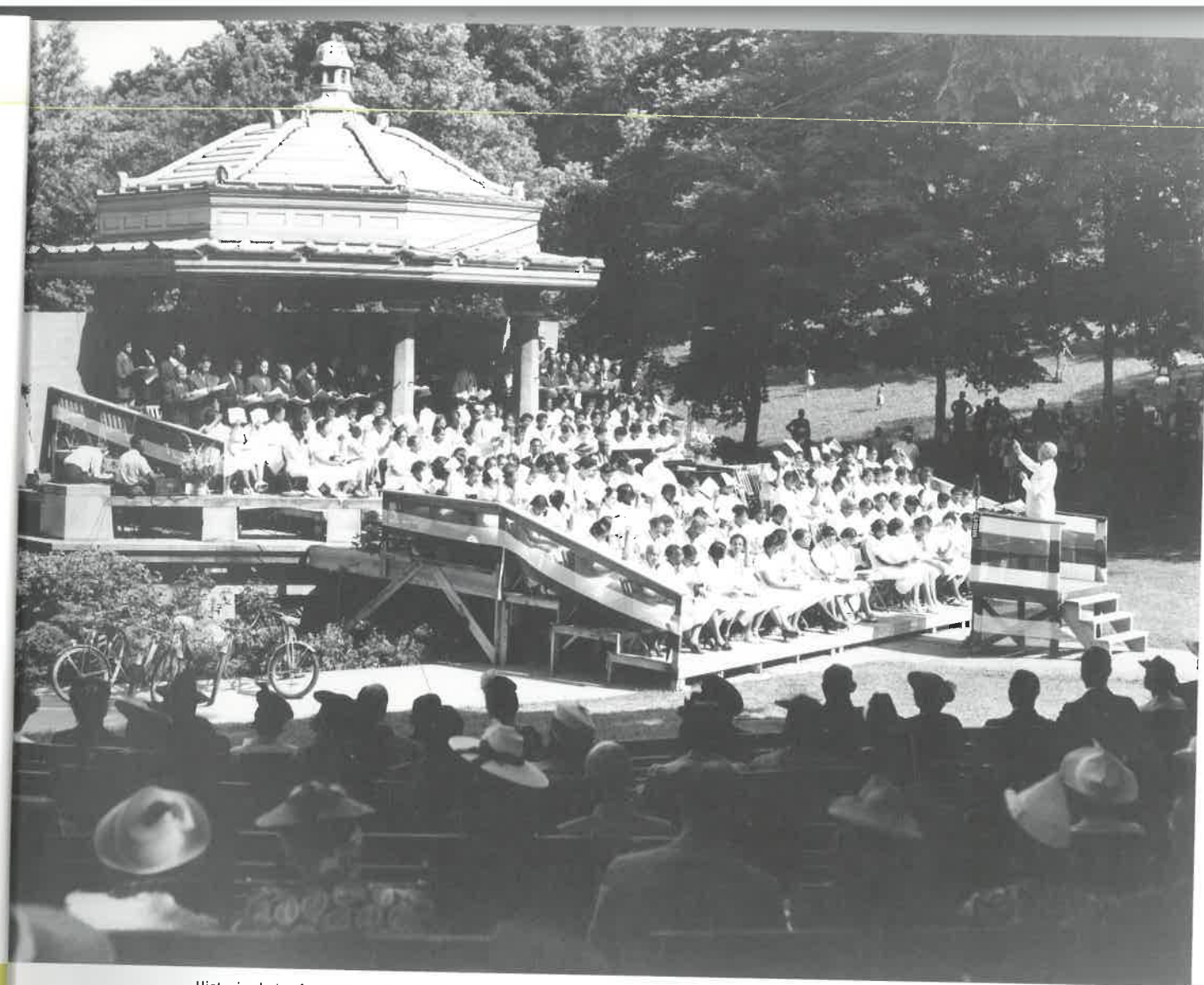
There is an opportunity to celebrate our city's growing diversity, to attract young working professionals, and to better serve an aging population. Events and programs should be tailored to the interests of specific ethnic and minority groups. The young professionals in Cincinnati (the "creative class") have been noted in other parts of the study as being critical to

the future health of Cincinnati. Parks should pay special attention to the creation of events and amenities which cater to these young professionals. Parks has done a good job of providing passive opportunities for Cincinnati's older citizens. Parks should investigate the addition of events and programs during weekdays which would have topics, entertainment or music which would appeal to an older segment of the population, while also considering programs that are inter-generational.

Following are specific recommendations to enhance programs and services.

*"The PEOPLE of Cincinnati  
enjoy events and programs,  
and they WANT MORE."*





Historic photo of concert in Eden Park

## CONCERTS, PROGRAMS & EVENTS

Cincinnati Parks conducted 39 individual concerts and festivals/community events serving a little over 10,000 people in the 2005 season. Outdoor concerts were the most popular event accounting for nearly 70% of attendance.

The *Acoustic Lunch Series at Piatt Park* was the favorite. The seventeen concert series drew more than 5,000 people, about half of all of event attendance. It catered to downtown workers midday during the work week.

The largest single event, *Balluminaria*, featured lighted hot air balloons strategically located at Mirror Lake. It has become something of a tradition in Cincinnati.

*Everybody's Backyard Picnics* are relatively new. The events offer free refreshments in a neighborhood park to promote community relations. Additionally, Parks often collaborates with neighborhoods and other community and civic organizations, creating and participating in programs throughout the city. These include everything from participation in the Home and Garden and Flower Shows, to participating in Paddlefest and at community council and Park Advisory Council events.

The *Mount Airy Forest Festival* celebrates the forest and nature; it drew 1000 people in 2005. Pancakes in the Woods at California Woods and Maple in Mt. Airy are among many of the nature-oriented park programs.

Yet another way to provide activities and events to draw people to parks is to work with a range of partners who are interested in staging concerts and activities. One way of accomplishing this is to promote use of bandstands and other performance and program venues by others, with Parks as a partner.

Because concerts were the most widely attended events, their expansion should be considered. These concerts should be done in partnership with neighborhoods, business districts, corporate sponsors and radio stations.

Recent concerts at *Digg's Plaza* in Burnet Woods have been a success, in part due to the proximity to a vibrant business district, several neighborhoods, a beautiful park setting, and a highly visible corner location. These smaller performances are just as important to consider as the larger events.



## SPONSORSHIPS



Radio stations and other potential media partners approached to sponsor park events should be carefully selected for their appeal to unserved demographics. Events should be distributed across the entire city in venues appropriate for their size and specific needs.

Increased attendance from underserved demographics and geographic locations will help broaden the support for the Park Board and increase park use, which in turn will enhance the perception of safety. Expanded events will enhance the Park brand, revenue generation and philanthropic support.

The *existing concert series* should be encouraged to grow and be supported by partnerships /sponsorships. Staff should find sponsors for new and existing concerts. Many times, radio stations will bring on board advertisers as event co-sponsors.

The *Everybody's Backyard Picnic* series should be considered for expansion to touch many more neighborhoods. Sponsorship for the event should be pursued either by staff or a contractor hired on a percentage basis.

Local supporters/sponsors and perhaps small businesses in the community where the event is held should be approached. Community Councils and Park Advisory Councils should continue to be engaged as viable partners, particularly to help find local small business sponsors.

*Balluminaria* should continue as a traditional event but should receive increased advertising to expand attendance. It should be more closely aligned with the Krohn Holiday Show, so dual promotion can occur. This may be another opportunity to cross-promote with the Playhouse in the Park and the Art Museum during the holiday season.

The *Mount Airy Forest Festival* should be nurtured and expanded. Additional sponsorship, particularly media sponsorship, should be pursued to help publicize and expand attendance. This festival seems ideal for a commercial sponsor such as a tree service or perhaps outdoor power equipment sales company. Parks should retain support from the Mount Airy Council and its radio sponsor.

An increase in events should be gradual, at a rate allowing for proper administration and control. Goals should be set through the annual performance goals system presently in place. All growth should be based upon sponsorship dollars rather than city dollars. The city budget presently expended should continue but be used as seed money for administrative costs and to promote sponsorships.



Piatt Park

*“Find SPONSORS for  
EXISTING concerts,  
as well as NEW ones.”*

## KROHN CONSERVATORY

Krohn Conservatory attracts more than 275,000 visitors each year and as the Citizen's Survey demonstrated, 95% of residents are aware of it and 92% recognize it as being good to excellent. It hosts six seasonal shows, numerous plant society, art and cultural programs and events and is a favorite rental location. Its permanent collection includes tropical rain forest plants, bonsai, cacti, and orchids. For over a decade, Krohn has produced the Butterfly Show which typically draws 50,000 to 60,000 over the six week show. It is a sponsored event charging an admission fee. Two other popular shows are the Holiday Show and the Spring/Easter Show. Each could be considered for transition to an admission-based show similar to the Butterfly Show model. This would take serious deliberation about potential impacts on attendance, public relations and budget.

As proposed elsewhere in this plan, if Krohn is expanded to create more display and exhibit space and more visitor services, admission should be charged for changing display areas but remain free for the rest of the facility.

*“Transform Eden Park  
into an ENTERTAINMENT  
DESTINATION.”*

In the case of the Holiday Show, co-promotion and co-sponsorship should be done with the Balluminaria event, Playhouse in the Park, and the Art Museum. A closely coordinated effort should be made every year, and on a variety of programs throughout the year, to transform Eden Park into an entertainment destination.





Charging admission fees at Krohn has been a sensitive topic in the past. Information gained from surveys completed on site indicates that most visitors are more affluent and able to afford entrance fees. To offset criticism of any new fees all areas except for the showroom should remain free. Entrances to the desert area and orchid house may need to be altered to afford access other than through the showroom. Additionally a scholarship or policy should be established to clearly state that no one should be turned away due to an inability to pay. An alternative would be to offer free admission during designated off peak hours or days.

A survey of customers at Krohn indicates strong purchases in the gift shop. That operation should be studied, and perhaps expanded with a broader inventory of merchandise, including books, specialty clothing, nature, conservation and gardening products. Krohn, as Cincinnati Parks' most popular venue, offers one of the best opportunities for revenue-generation. As outlined in capital sections of the Plan, Krohn should be considered for expansion with these enhanced programs in mind. And aggressive efforts are required to achieve adequate levels of sponsorship so that Krohn can be financially self-sufficient.



Krohn Conservatory

## PROGRAM & EVENT EXPANSION

The Park Board should look to expand programs that appeal to changing needs, desires and demographics. The Reggae Run and Concourse de Elegance Car Show at Ault Park, as well as new programs offered by 3CDC on Fountain Square are examples of major activities drawing crowds. In the future, more programs/events that also address growing Hispanic and Asian populations will be needed. Theodore M. Berry International Friendship Park is an example of an under-used venue for small to medium size events with a wide range of cultural appeal.

Fountain Square and the management of programs/ events by 3CDC is an example of a new partnership with a specific emphasis on making the best use of a vital public open space year-round. In the future, it is likely that similar partnerships will be worth considering for other urban parks where density, partnerships and interest exist. Piatt, Washington, and Lytle Parks may best be served by having a single coordinated approach to their programming, perhaps in concert with 3CDC's efforts. Burnet Woods and other Uptown Parks should be considered for coordinated programming. The new Cincinnati Riverfront Park is another example that should possibly have coordinated programming with other downtown and riverfront public spaces, although it may be large enough to warrant its own programming/events staff. Regardless, as demonstrated by cities across the country, these partnerships help bring vitality and value to these types of urban open spaces.

*“Piatt, Washington and Lytle  
Parks may best be served by  
having a SINGLE coordinated  
APPROACH to their  
PROGRAMMING.”*



Piatt Park

## NATURE EDUCATION



Cincinnati Parks is a leader in environmental and nature education, with a long history of providing opportunities for adults and youth. Parks does an outstanding job at five *Nature Centers* and at parks, preserves and various community sites throughout the city. Programs cover an array of topics and activities for youth, adults and older adults. The Education Section held 80 *Nature Connections* programs (an inner-city program) for 53 schools in 2006. A total of 21 different programs were conducted, all accredited under the State of Ohio Department of Education.

Nature Education conducted over 2,200 hours of program at 683 different sessions in 2006. These programs enlightened and entertained over 40,000 people. Proposed program enhancements include expanding and improving nature center displays and interpretive signs and materials through-out the system. The infrequent but popular history and culture tours should be expanded as funding, sponsorships and staff can be made available.

Because educational programs are a mix of free and fee-based, it is important to note that fee programs bring in revenue which helps pay their way. In 2006, outdoor education programs collected over \$101,000 in fees. The programs served communities city-wide. Specifically 32 of 53 neighborhoods had programs conducted within them.

Summer nature day camps are a popular program. Camps on the eastern side of town are much more intensely attended than those on the west. Aggressively marketing westside day camps and seeking partners to promote and participate in these camps can boost participation, support, and more profits.

School programs are well attended by certain school systems, yet greater collaboration with Cincinnati Public Schools is desirable. This is driven by the school system's ability to participate and the fact that the level of participation is generally determined at the school-by-school level rather than as a whole.

The summertime *Nature Next Door* program serves youth in the central portions of the city. The present population served is a limited percentage of the city's at-risk youth. Inner-city youth most in need of exposure to nature and an appreciation of conservation and the environment should be more widely served. Staff could investigate corporate sponsors and partners to underwrite the cost of this expansion, both for the summer *Nature Next Door* program and for the school year *Nature Connections* program. In addition to its fine Summer Day Camp and *Nature Next Door* sessions, the Education section also conducts stand alone educational programs for adults and children.

Most are one to two hour evening or weekend sessions with nature, conservation or environmental topics. The Education Section should investigate addition of intergenerational programs, those that are geared to promote interaction between youth and older adults, particularly families.

Parks should consider closer relationships with local educational institutions, particularly those doing research.

Cincinnati Parks have some unique natural areas which could lend themselves to use as field laboratories for ecology, alternative energy, green building technologies and other specialized environmental research. Parks should seek researchers to conduct biological and botanical inventories of parks and preserves and document the findings in an accessible database.

New programs and facilities that highlight green roofs, stormwater biofiltration, alternative energies, salvage and reuse of materials, conservation, recycling, etc. should be actively implemented and promoted. The Park Board and City should use their purchasing power in the marketplace to assert these values, and integrate internal training programs that express these values as well.

Parks should consider encouraging the creation of a Center for Sustainable Cities, or other type of regional environmental, research and educational center, to provide for the study of sustainable practices. It could also provide community meeting space and shared resources for the city's wide range of environmental non-profits.

Synergies among Park Board personnel, educational, non-profit, and community partners, could make for another flagship facility, comparable in potential to Krohn Conservatory, which is a local landmark, a regional attraction, and an educational and research resource. Excellent examples are the Ecotrust Center in Portland or the Urban Ecology Center in Milwaukee.

*“Cincinnati Parks have some  
UNIQUE NATURAL  
AREAS which lend  
themselves to use as  
FIELD LABORATORIES.”*



A nature education program in action



## RENTALS & SERVICES

Almost 100,000 people used facilities rented from the Cincinnati Park Board in 2006. Uses varied from family reunions, weddings, community organization picnics, to business and civic meetings and sporting events. The Park Board has divided rentals into two categories. First is the rental of smaller facilities at lower rates such as picnic shelters, fields and small areas. These rentals are handled by Park staff. The second category of rentals at larger venues is managed through a contractor who not only rents the facility but arranges for services like catering, tent rentals and other special accommodations. Most of these rentals are for parties, wedding ceremonies or corporate meetings.

The in-house rental of smaller facilities generally appears to be well run as a service to all Tri-state residents. Given that both city and non-city residents rent facilities and rentals have increased each year, rates should increase to keep pace with the market and better defray costs.

Fees should be assessed in light of the local park facilities rental market, particularly Hamilton County Parks.

Rentals handled through an outside contractor appears to be a wise way to provide appropriate service to upscale wedding/corporate customers. Continued careful review of the rental market should be undertaken annually to assure Parks receive a fair share of revenue from this important business.

Creation of new specialized facilities which cater to corporate gatherings and weddings, modeled after the Drees Pavilion in Northern Kentucky, warrants investigation.

Initial construction of the Drees facility was funded by a corporate entity and the day-to-day operation is run by a non-profit foundation. Profits from this operation help fund improvements and operations in Devou Park. Parks should investigate adding these types of facilities in all three districts. Sites have been identified at, Eden/Krohn, Inwood, and Mt. Airy.

Where possible, new or expanded facilities should take full advantage of the views and settings of these classic parks without negatively impacting them. Inwood should take advantage of its central location in Uptown.

In general, enhancements to rental facilities are proposed in the capital improvement plan to continue to accommodate needs of rental customers.

The Park Board should take a particularly close look at creating several enhanced facilities at Mt. Airy Forest. This should include increased capacity to serve weddings, private parties and corporate meetings at Maple Ridge Lodge and enhancing the Mt. Airy Arboretum; creating a better rental facility and visitor center.

The existing hiking trails, Frisbee golf, and tree house, along with the many picnic areas are already a major draw; adding a four mile bike trail/multiple-use trail will be a further draw.

*“Take full advantage of the  
VIEWS and SETTINGS  
of these classical parks.”*



The Pavilion at Ault Park

# REINVESTING IN PARKS

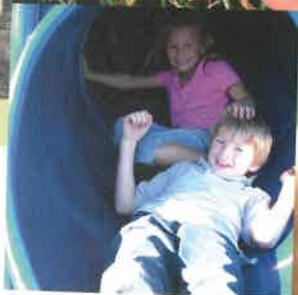
## CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- 126 Capital Investment Approach
- 129 Capital Improvement Strategy
  - 129 *The Urban Core*
  - 143 *Regional Parks & Neighborhood Parks*
  - 154 *Preserves and Community Greenspace*
  - 156 *New & Expanded Parks*
  - 157 *Acquisition & Divestment*
  - 161 *A Green Network*
    - *Parkways | Boulevards*
    - *Natural Systems & Greenways*
  - 168 *Capital Improvement Budget*

THE PROPOSED SYSTEM-WIDE IMPROVEMENTS



# 4



## CAPITAL INVESTMENT APPROACH

While some of the broad objectives and initiatives of The Plan have been previously outlined, the proposed system-wide capital improvements are categorized and described in more detail in this chapter. The park system is comprised of many components, from the connective tissue that holds the parts together to the individual sites and their specific features.

The Centennial Plan outlines the following *Capital Strategies* to address all of these dimensions:

### Revitalizing the Urban Core

Enhancing and developing parks in the following core areas:

Downtown | CBD  
Over-the-Rhine  
Basin Neighborhoods  
Uptown

### Sustaining and Enhancing Parks & Preserves

This is inclusive of sites throughout the city, including:

Regional Parks  
Neighborhood Parks  
Preserves & Community Greenspaces  
New Parks | New Initiatives

### Conserving, Strengthening and Linking Parkways & Natural Systems

This is the connective framework of linear systems including:

Parkways  
Boulevards  
Scenic Drives  
Linear Parks  
Greenways  
Trails

### Planting & Sustaining the Urban Forest

This is inclusive of the city-wide inventory of trees including:

Street Trees  
Neighborhood Reforestation





## Capital Funding

The proposed capital improvement program is an ambitious plan to restore, renovate and sustain Park's existing infrastructure and to enhance the park system. More than two-thirds of system buildings are over 60 years old and infrastructure of the historic system is aging and in constant need of attention. The capital plan addresses these needs. The Plan also recommends a range of new initiatives to bring more people to parks and help revitalize neighborhoods, the city and the region.

Some of these enhancements and new facilities will also generate revenue for parks while others support significant environmental and development goals for the city.

A number of flagship projects are proposed within the plan and these are relatively costly. These include the Cincinnati Riverfront Park, currently under development, which is a \$90 million project. Another is the long-planned expansion of Krohn Conservatory, which is a \$42 million project. Both require significant amounts of private and other public funding support.

Funding is targeted to come from city capital dollars, other local public dollars, and state and federal funds. Funding is also to come from private sources and joint venture developments.

The Plan includes the following breakdown of costs over a 20-year planning period:

City Funding to sustain the system	\$48.7 M
City Funding for new initiatives	\$80.3 M
Other Public Funding	\$60.0 M
Private Funding	\$79.5 M
Joint Venture Developments	\$13.0 M

The total capital budget from all funding sources is \$280 million. It should be noted, however, that two mega-projects alone, Krohn and Cincinnati Riverfront Park, account for \$132 million of this total. Another \$32 million of this budget are the costs to implement the master plan for the parks in Uptown. This leaves a total for all other projects of \$116 million of which \$48.7 million is for basic infrastructure support and the remainder for new initiatives and significant enhancements.

The \$48.7 million for sustaining the existing system is the cost of investment in Park's infrastructure at current rates of city capital investment of approximately \$4 million annually over the first 12 years of plan implementation. Future investments of \$3.7 to \$4 million annually will be needed for the remainder of the planning period.

Achieving the goal of securing an additional \$80 million over 20 years for new projects ranging from expanding Krohn to making significant improvements at Mt. Airy Forest and Arboretum is a major challenge and not likely to be available from city capital improvement sources.

During the master planning process, there was much discussion about the existing county park levy. The consensus of opinion has been not to attempt an additional levy during the current one, but to wait until the existing levy ends and at that time collaborate with the Hamilton County Park District to carve out a portion of new levy funds for city park endeavors with a regional focus such as Krohn, Mt. Airy and trails.

This would seem to be a workable solution for the large capital need the master plan has identified. If that allocation of levy dollars is not forthcoming, then another alternative would be to have the citizens pass a capital improvement levy specifically ear-marked to build those facilities listed in the master plan.

The tax language could be written so as to have a definitive life based on yearly dollar needs of the master plan and ending at a defined termination year.

With this funding overview as a backdrop, the following pages outline each of the capital improvement initiatives in more detail.



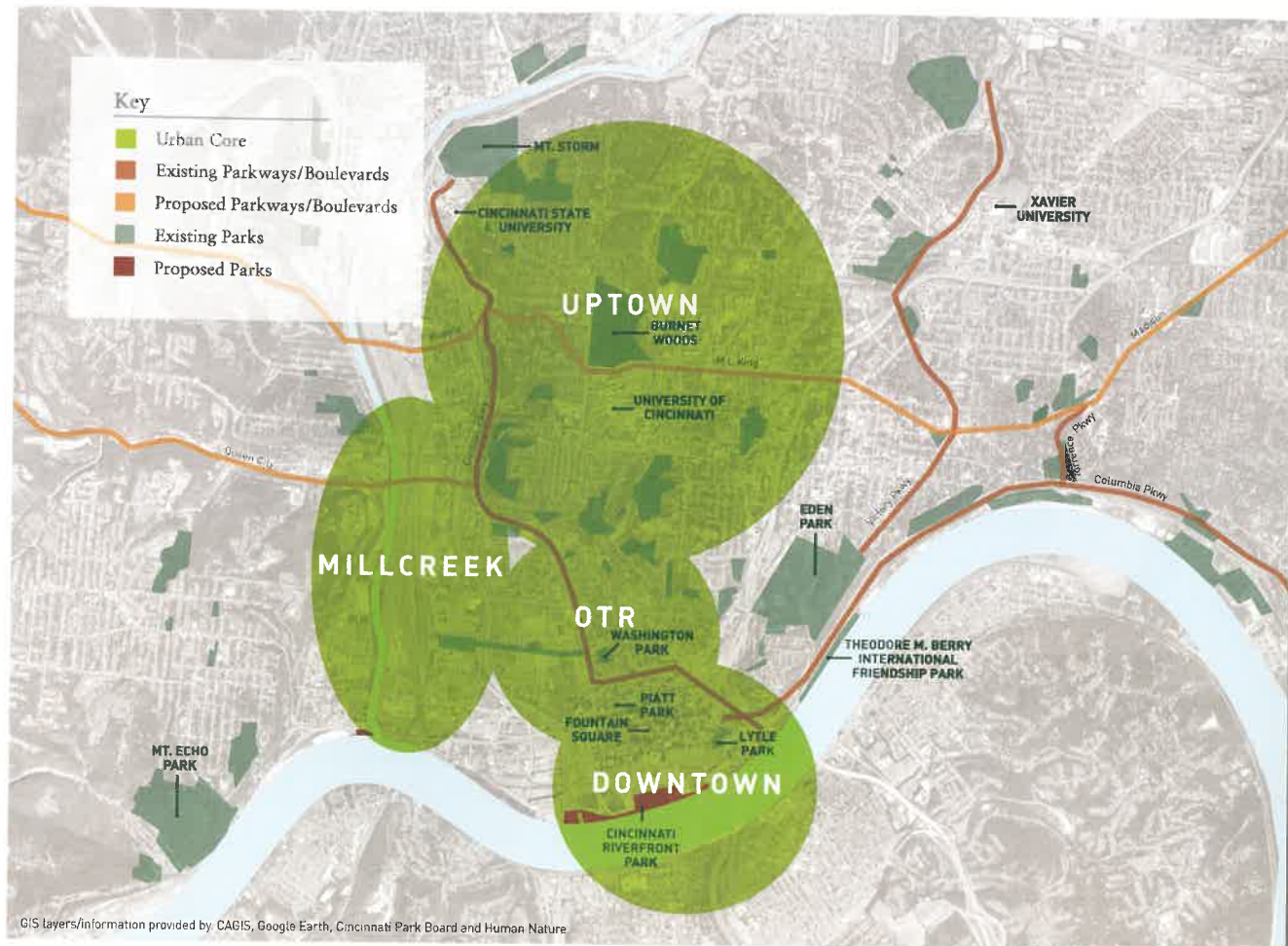
*“The proposed program is an ambitious plan to RESTORE, RENOVATE and SUSTAIN Parks existing infrastructure as well as to ENHANCE THE PARK SYSTEM.”*

# CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

## THE URBAN CORE

One of the Plan's Key Initiatives is to leverage parks and open space as a catalyst for the revitalization of the urban core, stimulating redevelopment, improving quality of life and providing better connectivity between the many assets that exist in the heart of our community.

The core of Downtown, Over-the-Rhine, Uptown and Mill Creek Valley—have unique needs, assets and opportunities. In the following pages, more detailed strategies are outlined for each area. Downtown and Over-the-Rhine are described together, with an emphasis on the symbiotic relationship between the two.



GIS layers/information provided by CAGIS, Google Earth, Cincinnati Park Board and Human Nature.

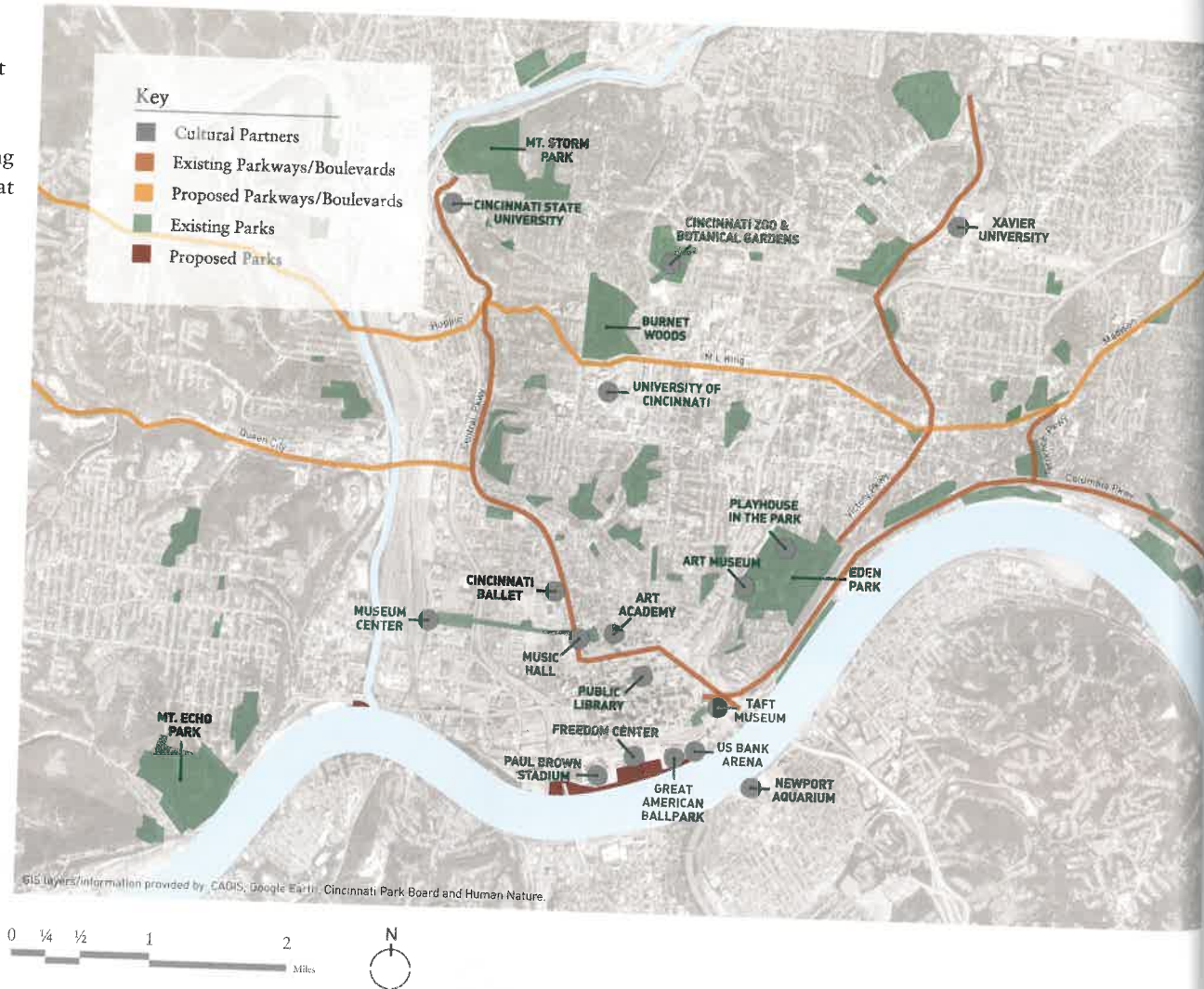


## CULTURAL PARTNERS IN THE URBAN CORE

Tremendous cultural assets—schools, arts institutions, museums, performance venues, etc. are located in Cincinnati's core. These assets exist in the urban core for good reasons—they are part of the rich history of our city, and they are attractions for a broader regional audience seeking unique experiences in a dynamic urban setting that cannot be found in the surrounding suburbs and rural areas.

It is interesting to note the association of these assets to our urban parks and parkways as illustrated in the adjacent map. Almost all are located either within or adjacent to a park or parkway. These associations offer tremendous opportunities for partnerships—marketing/public relations, programming /events and funding, if approached together, could provide immeasurable mutual benefit. The Park Board should aggressively pursue these partnerships, both individually and collectively.

## CULTURAL PARTNERS & PARKS AND PARKWAYS





## CINCINNATI RIVERFRONT PARK

### The Centerpiece

Working for the last several years with the Corps of Engineers, local partners, and local, state, and federal governments, the Park Board has been crafting a powerful vision for the centerpiece to the park system—where downtown can finally reconnect with the Ohio River. This new park, nestled between the two stadiums and the Ohio River, will front on a new downtown neighborhood called “The Banks”. The park will provide an appropriate setting for one of the region’s premier features, the Roebling Suspension Bridge, and enhance the setting of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.

The park is being planned to function as a “front yard” for the city—accommodating major events/festivals, and continuing the necklace of connected greenspaces along the Ohio River that link with the Serpentine Wall, Sawyer Point, Bicentennial Commons and Theodore M. Berry International Friendship Park. The first phase of the park is slated to begin construction in 2008, though it will take years of continued funding from a variety of sources to complete the park.

The park of almost 40 acres will provide a wide array of features and amenities, including:

- › Restaurants | Cafes
- › Carousel
- › Playgrounds
- › Decorative Water Features | Waterfalls
- › Public Art
- › Family “Porch” Swings
- › Expressive Gardens & Tree Groves
- › Performance Lawns
- › Walkways & Bike Trail
- › River Edge Promenade
- › Boat Docks

*“The park is PLANNED to function as a ‘FRONT YARD’ for the city.”*



Cincinnati Riverfront Park

## UPTOWN

Before the Kessler Plan of 1907, Adolph Strauch created a plan for Burnet Woods, a major park in what is now known as Uptown. Kessler added to the ensemble by proposing a series of connected parks along the edge of the plateau overlooking the city. Recently, in coordination with the Centennial Plan, the Park Board partnered with the Uptown Consortium to produce a plan that would promote neighborhood revitalization and renewed investment in Uptown parks. The plan included four study areas, with plans for each of the parks within these study areas represented on the next several pages.

Clifton Study Area  
Burnet Woods

CUF Study Area  
Fairview & Bellevue Hill Parks

Mt. Auburn | Corryville Study Area  
Inwood, Jackson Hill and Filson Parks

Avondale Study Area  
Fleischmann Gardens

*“A plan that would  
PROMOTE neighborhood  
REVITALIZATION and  
renewed investment  
in UPTOWN.”*



Above: The Sculpture at Burnet Woods

Left: The structure at Bellevue Hill Park



## BURNET WOODS | The Oasis

- › Ludlow & King Gateways
- › Streetscape Linkages to/from Zoo ①
- › Restored Stream Corridor with Trail Interpretive Stops: Stormwater BMP's ②
- › Clifton Gateway: Realigned with Dixmyth ③
- › Improved Parking & Picnic | Play Rental Area
- › Realigned Street with Parking, Pedestrian Promenade & Connecting Gardens ④
- › Enhanced Trailside, Concession Building | & Terrace ⑤
- › Existing Road Removed to Strengthen Forest & Stream Linkage ⑥
- › Terrace, Cafe & Restaurant on Clifton Avenue ⑦
- › Enhanced Lake Promenade
- › New Scenic Drive Alignment ⑧
- › "Green" Park Maintenance Building ⑨
- › Enhanced Streetscape Along Clifton Avenue and MLK Boulevard
- › Expanded Disc Golf Course ⑩
- › Native Landscape Restoration & Biofiltration
- › Entry Plaza & Improved Intersection
- › Bandstand Grounds Enhancements ⑪



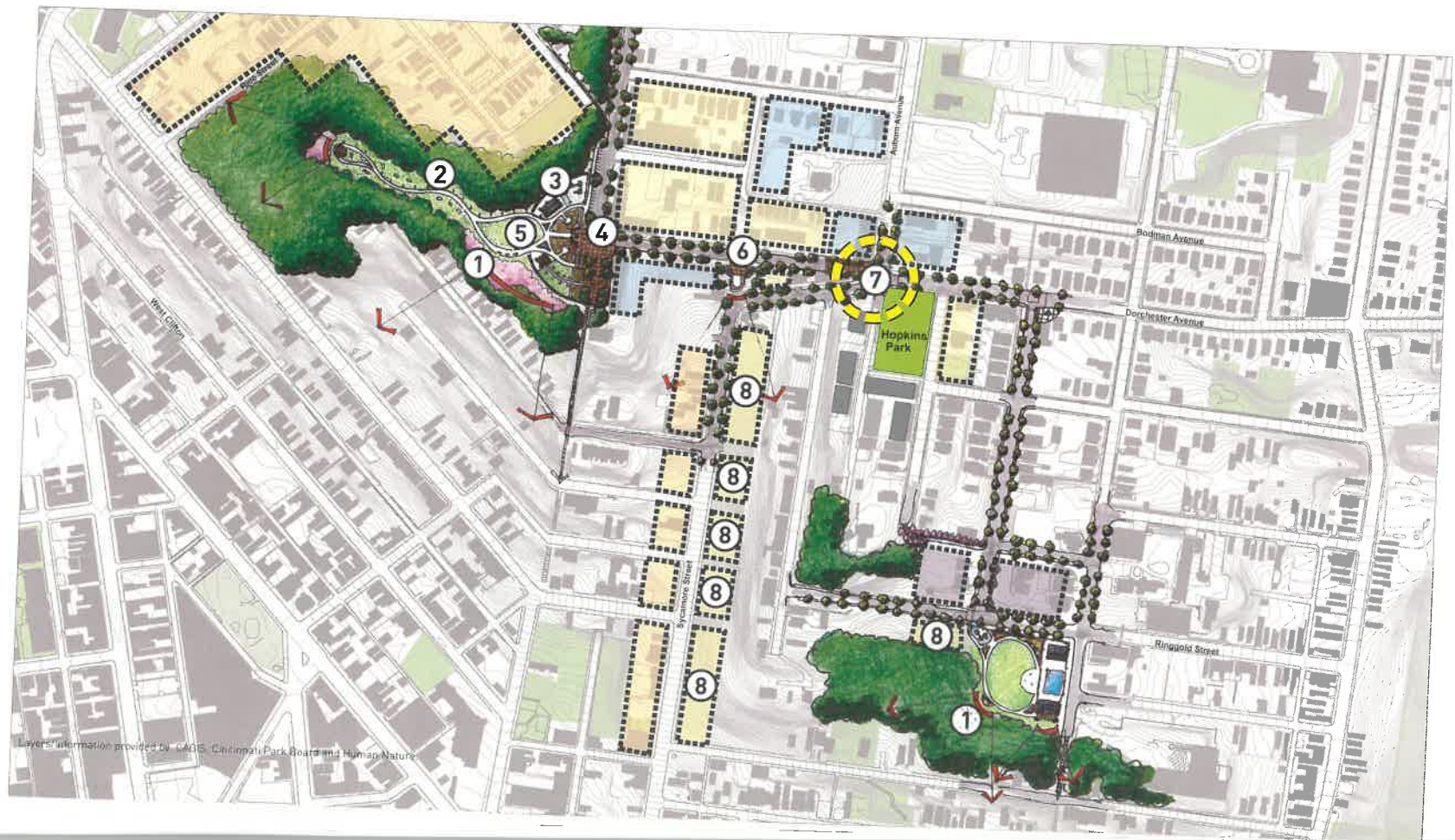
## INWOOD PARK | The Gateway

- › Uptown Gateway Plaza
- › Water Feature ①
- › Garden Terraces ②
- › Enhanced Streetscape on Vine Street
- › Parking ③
- › Accessible Ramp ④
- › New Residential Development on Isolated Park Parcels ⑤
- › Pedestrian Promenade Along New Street ⑥
- › Enhanced Pavilion, Gardens, Play & Performance Hub ⑦
- › Improved Path System
- › Restroom & Rentable Shelter ⑧
- › Dog Park ⑨
- › Parking & Basketball Courts ⑩
- › Overlook Along Walkway Loop
- › New Entry ⑪



# JACKSON HILL PARK & FILSON PARK | The Eastern Windows

- › Overlook ①
- › Pedestrian Paths & Picnic Areas ②
- › New Shelter & Playground ③
- › Parking
- › Entry Plaza with Park Signage ④
- › Community Terrace
- › Overlook Shelter & Garden ⑤
- › Community Green with View ⑥
- › Improved Playground
- › Trellis-Covered Terrace & Overlook
- › Enhanced Existing Pool with New Sprayground
- › Intersection Enhancement, One-Way Into Park & Plaza at the Flat Iron Building ⑦
- › Sale of Vacant Park Parcels for New Residential Development ⑧



Layer information provided by CAPS, Cincinnati Park, Roads and Human Nature

## FAIRVIEW PARK | The Promenade

- › New Shelter, Water Play & Overlook ①
- › Fairview Commons & Family Play Area ②
- › New Park Entry (two-way) ③
- › Landscape Interpretation of Incline ④
- › Improved Pedestrian Staircase
- › Accessibility Improvements to Existing Play Area
- › Two-Way Park Drive with Designated Parking Areas ⑤
- › Turn-Around ⑥
- › Improved Pedestrian Promenade, Overlooks & Interpretive Features
- › Park Identification Signage/Icon
- › Improved North Entry (one-way) ⑦
- › New Residential Development ⑧



## BELLEVUE HILL PARK | The Central Window

- › Pedestrian Access
- › Bellevue Green with Walking Loop  
⊗ Improved Parking ⊗ Play ①
- › New Vehicular ⊗ Pedestrian Entrance ②
- › Trail Access ③
- › Programmed Existing Pavilion
- › Improved Picnic Areas
- › Lawn Terraces ④
- › View Management
- › Improved Stair Access
- › Decorative Perimeter Wall ⊗ Pedestrian Gates
- › Incline Interpretive Remnants  
⊗ Landscape Enhancements ⑤
- › Retaining Wall along Clifton Ave.



Layers (information provided by: CAGIS, Cincinnati Park Board and Human Nature.



## FLEISCHMANN GARDENS The Strolling Garden

- › Expanded Park and Restored Woodland with Path Loop ①
- › Community Entry ②
- › Garden Edge with Fence ③
- › New Maintenance Access ④
- › Improved Neighborhood Access to Garden ⑤
- › Garden Trellis Frame
- › Community Gathering Space ⑥
- › Historic Garden Enhancements
- › Accessible Ramp & Gardens ⑦
- › Improved Garden Entries & Streetscape
- › Enlarged Playground
- › New Residential Development Facing Park ⑧



## MILL CREEK VALLEY

The future of the Mill Creek Valley is one of our City's most important challenges and opportunities in the next century. Despite the environmental obstacles, it offers some of the largest opportunities for redevelopment, after "The Banks" has been accomplished. Parks, restorative strategies and trails could be a major stimulus for redevelopment, providing quality of life amenities and a connective network. In particular, two major needs and opportunities have been identified in relation to this plan:

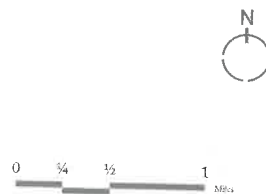
*Collaborating with* and supporting the Mill Creek Restoration Project and other partners in the implementation of the Mill Creek Greenway Plan.

*Working with* many different partners, both public and private, to connect Downtown, OTR and Uptown across the Mill Creek Valley to/from the Western Hills via several potential routes:

- Ohio River
- 8th Street
- Ezzard Charles/Museum Center
- Western Hills Viaduct
- Mitchell/Salway Area

### Key

- Proposed Parks
- Existing Parks
- River Greenways



BIS layers/information provided by GIS, Google Earth, Cincinnati Park Board and Human Nature

## REGIONAL PARKS & NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

### Mt. Airy Forest

As the largest park in the system, one of the most rustic in character, one of the most popular to visit, and the hub of the west district, Mt. Airy has both the need and the potential for enhancements to better serve the community and take greater advantage of some of its most unique qualities/assets. Specifically, upgrades to the network of trails and to each of the major use areas could provide better accommodations for users, while also preserving the park's unique rustic character. Existing trails should be upgraded and the sign system improved. A new paved trail loop that accommodates bicycles and connects major use areas in the eastern half of the site should be designed and implemented. The trail would parallel existing roads along the ridgetops and forest edge. This trail network can then be connected to a larger system that connects several sites to the north and east all the way to the Mill Creek.

Upgrades to major facilities should include expansion and refinement of the arboretum to have more of a focus on native plants. A more detailed plan should be developed for the arboretum that focuses more exotic plants near the building and lake, with the collection transitioning to more natives as it moves outward toward the valleys. The arboretum building should be upgraded or replaced as a Visitor's Center for Mt. Airy, with adequate parking added near the building and near the lake. Pine Ridge should be converted/expanded to be the Mt. Airy Nature Center. Maple Ridge should be expanded as a major rental lodge for multiple community and corporate rental uses. A new rentable shelter is proposed in Area 23. Each of these facility upgrades offers revenue-generating potential, without sacrificing the unique character of Mt. Airy.



*“Facility upgrades offer  
REVENUE-GENERATING  
POTENTIAL, without  
sacrificing the unique  
character of Mt. Airy.”*



### More specific upgrades include

#### › Arboretum

*Develop* an updated concept plan for the Arboretum and the Arboretum building

*Determine* the existing and potential support base and constituency for funding development of the Arboretum

*Develop* a program and strategy for the enhancement of the arboretum, its operations and its funding

*Create* and implement a long term funding and development plan

#### › Reserved Areas

*Enhance* reserved areas to better serve rentals

*Develop* a new reserved area and shelter at Area 23

#### › Property Acquisition | Development

*Provide* a new park entry and improve access to trails on the West side of the park at Diehl Road

#### › Trails

*Upgrade* trail system and trail signs

*Create* new bike/hike trail. This is a potential four to five mile trail on the Colerain side of the park

*Create* trail link with preserves and park properties along Kirby Valley. Connect Mt. Airy with LaBoiteaux Woods, linking College Hill, Mt. Airy and Northside communities

#### › Signs

*Upgrade* directional signs and facility signs

*Develop* kiosk/event/rental signs

#### › Dog Park

*Sustain* dog park to support heavy use

#### › Pine Ridge Lodge

*Seek* funds for capital improvement and operation of Pine Ridge as nature center and work-program base

#### › Infrastructure

*Maintain/repair/restore* all buildings and structures as needed

*Maintain/repair/replace* utilities and circulation systems as needed

*Reforest & sustain* Mt. Airy Forest

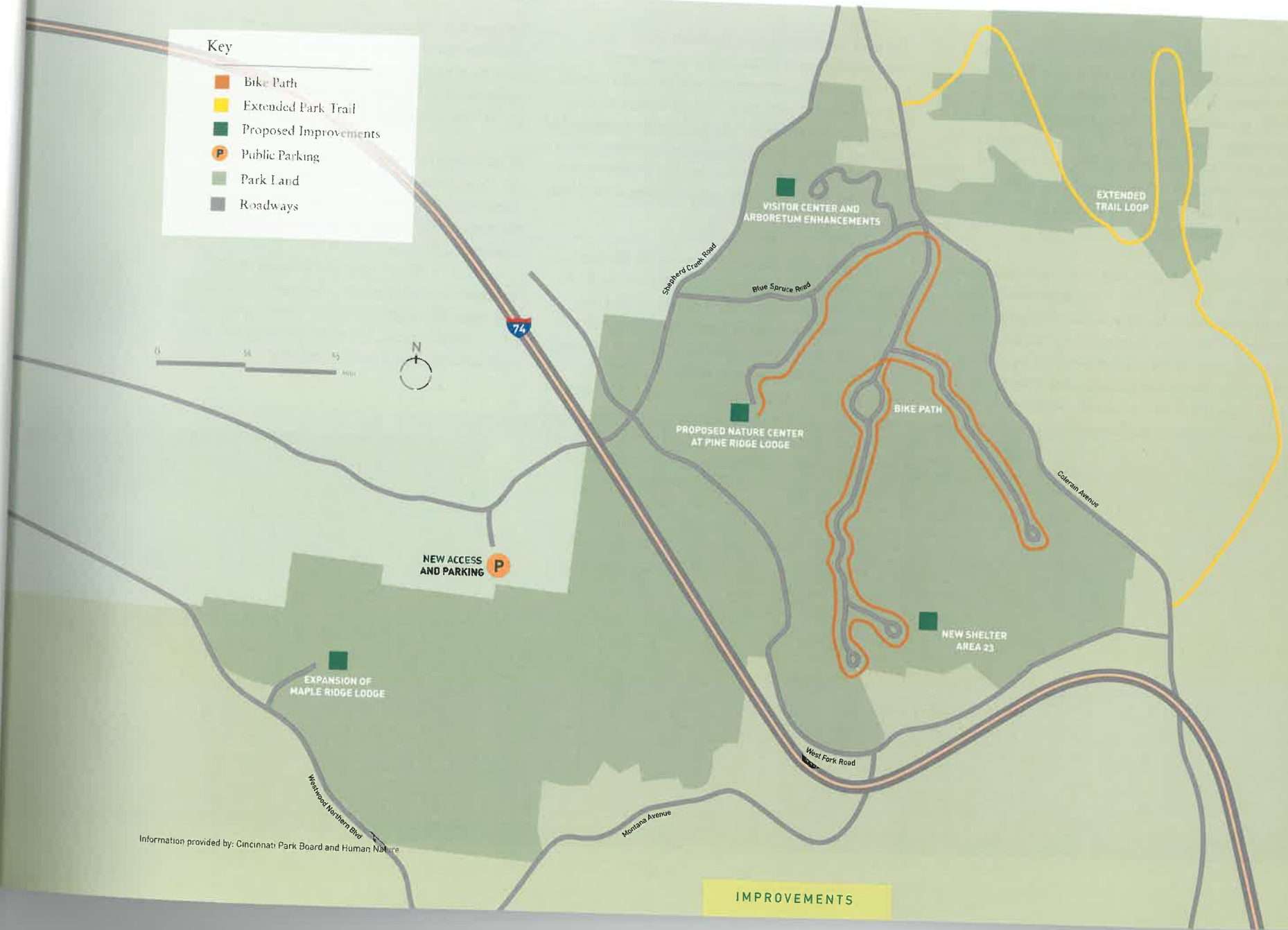


# MT. AIRY FOREST



**Key**

- Bike Path
- Extended Park Trail
- Proposed Improvements
- Public Parking
- Park Land
- Roadways



Information provided by: Cincinnati Park Board and Human Nature

## IMPROVEMENTS

## Eden Park

Eden Park is one of the city's most treasured and frequently visited places. It is home to the Cincinnati Art Museum, the Playhouse in the Park, Seabright Pavilion, historic Waterworks structures, the Park Board's Administrative Office and iconic gazebo, an inspiring collection of garden settings, overlooks, public art and natural areas, and the Park Board's flagship facility, Krohn Conservatory.

From its poetic beginnings as an open pastoral oasis, the park has been loved and added to so much that it has become a gallery of gardens and features—a unique constellation of assets found nowhere else in the park system. The challenge is that these individual gardens and features have been conceived independently, without revisiting the overall impacts and integration with the entire park. This has resulted in wonderful individual assets, but with an in-between landscape “that doesn't know what to be” and a park infrastructure that can't fully connect and support the features.

The park's infrastructure, facilities and management need to be updated. Improved parking, trails, accommodations for major events, connectivity between assets via an inventive, site-specific transit strategy, upgrades to the Seabright Pavilion, more intensive landscape maintenance, an expanded Krohn, and collaborative programming/marketing with the other cultural assets would take the park to the next level.

An expanded Krohn will bring one of the best opportunities for increased revenues to the Park Board, while also providing more services and facilities for community use. It could include its own parking structure, a restaurant overlooking the city, expanded exhibit spaces, classrooms, more space for horticultural displays, a banquet/conference facility, an auditorium, an expanded gift shop and visitor's center, and sculpture gardens, all in an expressive garden setting that is sensitively integrated into the Eden Park environment.

When Adolph Strauch came to the city, Cincinnati was considered the “horticultural epicenter of the U.S.” With these assets and the Park Board's expertise, this could be true again.

The space surrounding Mirror Lake and the flat reservoir space below it need to be upgraded to provide a major central event venue that all of the institutions in the park can share and the region as a whole can enjoy.

In coordination with expansion plans for both the Cincinnati Art Museum and the Playhouse, these enhancements will place Eden Park among the nation's top urban parks such as the Boston Commons, Central Park in New York and Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. Without these refinements and upgrades, the park will start to feel more like a grandmother's attic—packed full of special treasures, but without the grace and respectful setting that they deserve.



*“These enhancements will  
place EDEN PARK among  
the nation’s TOP  
URBAN PARKS.”*



### Other Recommendations Include

› Memorial Groves

*Enhance* groves with landscape and walkway improvements and interpretive signs which tie them together

› Seasongood Pavilion Grounds

*Develop* and implement improvement plan to include seating, walking surfaces, entry plaza and landscape

*Determine* any improvement needs for the Pavilion itself

› Signs

*Design & install* an integrated system of wayfinding signs to all park destinations

› Infrastructure

*Maintain/repair/replace* utilities and circulation system as needed

*Update & implement* transportation/circulation/parking plan, including improvement of trails and pathways

*Enhance* old reservoir walls as park features

### Specific Enhancements

*Improved linkages* between gardens for a walking tour

*Stronger connection* between Krohn Conservatory and Memorial Groves

*Widened & enhanced* main path through Memorial Groves that include the following:

› Improved entry and signage

› Improved and consistent markers at trees and an overall map of Memorial Groves area





# THE GARDENS OF EDEN



## Key

-  Park Trails
-  Transit Loop
-  Transit Stops
-  Public Parking
-  Pedestrian Connection
-  Gardens of Eden Areas
-  Park Land
-  Roadways



Information provided by Cincinnati Park Board and Humana Nature.

## REGIONAL PARKS & NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

### Ault Park

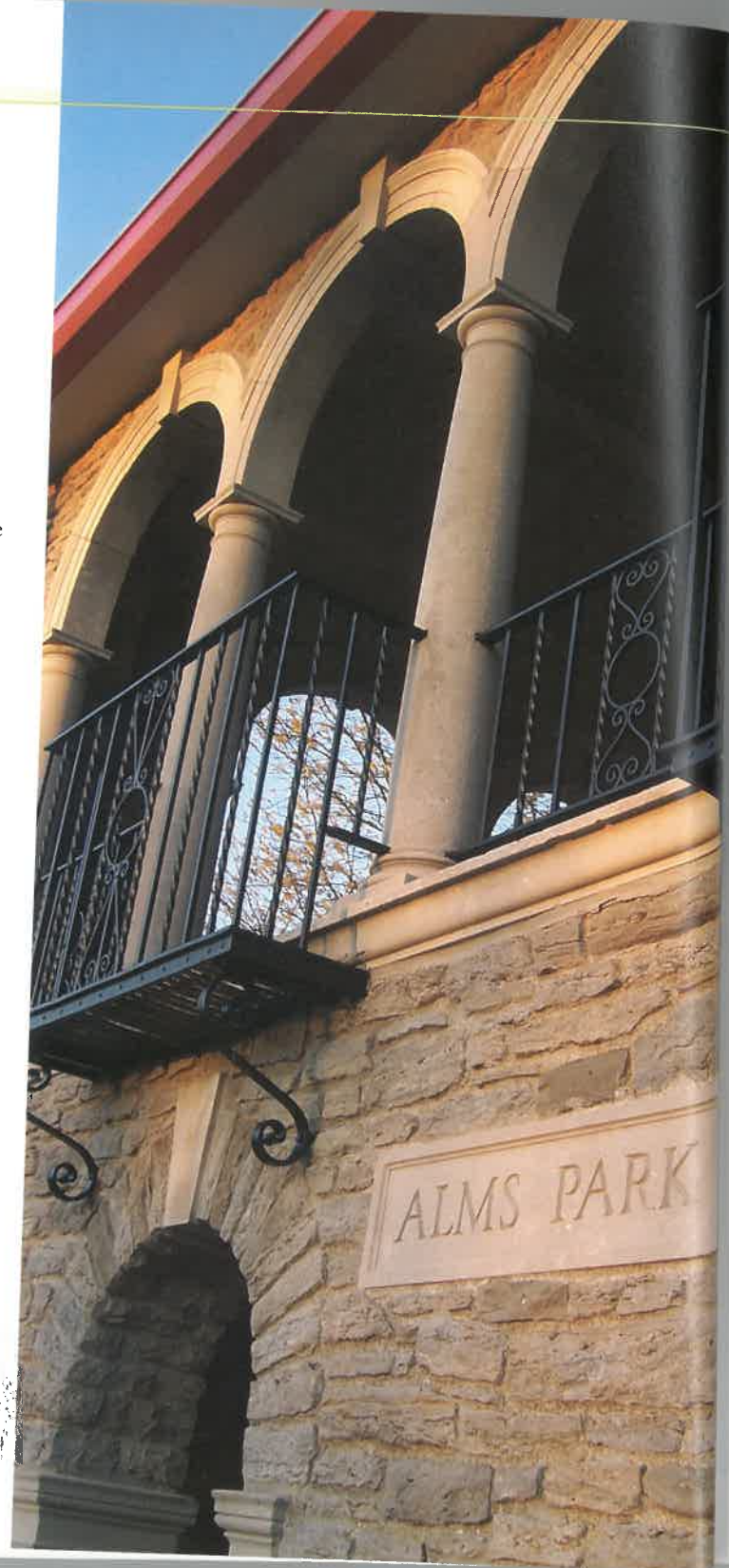
- ▶ Infrastructure
  - Maintain* buildings and structures and repair as needed
  - Maintain/repair/replace* utilities as needed
  - Renovate/replace* service building
  - Replace* sections of Observatory sidewalk
- ▶ Trails
  - Maintain/repair* trails as needed
  - Improve* trail signs
  - Develop* paved bike/hike trail from Observatory to Red Bank

### Armleder | Little Miami River Park

Work with CRC and Hamilton County Parks to implement remaining phases of Master Plan

### French Park

- ▶ Shelter
  - Enhance/upgrade* or replace reserved shelter and provide handicap access
- ▶ Circulation System
  - Develop* hard surface walkways connecting features and link to Amberley Recreation Site
- ▶ Bird Sanctuary
  - Develop* sanctuary, pond and viewing station as per Master Plan
- ▶ Trails
  - Upgrade* trail system and trail signs
- ▶ Infrastructure
  - Maintain/repair/replace* utilities as needed
  - Add* new playground and picnic area
  - Consider partnership* on master plan implementation with HCPD
- ▶ French House
  - Carry out* second phase rehab of 2nd floor if supportable by rental market
- ▶ Overlook
  - Create* overlook and amphitheater as per Master Plan



### Alms Park

- › Reserved area  
*Construct* new shelter and enhance reserved area as per Master Plan if supportable by rental market
- › Lunken Overlook  
*Rebuild & Enhance*

### Burnet Woods & Inwood Park

- › Master Plan Implementation  
*Implement* recommendations of the Uptown Parks & Neighborhood Revitalization Plan in partnership with the Uptown Consortium and other partners

### Drake Park

- › Infrastructure  
*Maintain/repair/replace* utilities and circulation system as needed
- Assess* condition of overlook and renovate as needed
- Create* trail loop

### McEvoy Park

- › Infrastructure  
*Maintain/repair/replace* utilities and circulation systems as needed

### Mount Echo Park

- › Pavilion Area  
*Enhance grounds*
- › Walks  
*Develop* walkway from west overlook, to Pavilion, to tennis courts
- › Infrastructure  
*Maintain/repair/replace* utilities as needed  
*Repair* overlook and furnishings as needed  
*Determine* needs of operations support  
*Remove* service building and relocate to different park in west district
- › Trails  
*Maintain & upgrade* trails and signs. Extend trails to Sedamsville Neighborhood and investigate link to Embshoff and to river



### Mount Storm Park

- › Historical Analysis  
*Allow* historical analysis to drive future enhancements and potential relocation of park elements
- › Infrastructure  
*Maintain/repair/replace* utilities as needed  
*Consider* relocation of playground to open up views between shelter and Temple of Love  
*Rebuild* trail to Ludlow Avenue  
*Upgrade* picnic area and wine cellar feature

### Rapid Run Park

- › Infrastructure  
*Maintain/repair/replace* utilities and circulation system as needed  
*Enhance* landscape at parking lot and along parkway  
*Improve* service drive from Gurley Road

### Stanbery Park

- Implement* remaining phases of Master Plan





Clifton Plaza—Burnet Woods

Hyde Park Square

## SMALL NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS



Bellevue Hill Park, Bishop Triangle, Mount Auburn Triangle, Classen Park, Corryville Triangle, Fairview Park, Fleischmann Gardens, Jackson Hill Park & Filson Park

Master Plan Implementation

*Implement* recommendations of the Uptown Parks & Neighborhood Revitalization Plan in partnership with the Uptown Consortium and other partners

### Annwood Park

*Add* drinking fountain

### Geier Esplanade

*Expand & enhance* square

### Hauck Gardens

*Redesign/enhance* Gardens & circulation system

*Prepare* garden improvement plan

*Provide* modest parking/roadway improvements

*Repair/replace* utilities as needed

### Hyde Park Square

*Improve* walks

*Renovate* park walls and landscape

### Jergens

*Replace* fence & *enhance* walks

### Kennedy Heights

*Extend* walkway/trail system

*Incorporate* adjacent school site if/when it becomes available

### Martin Luther King Park

*Create* new master plan

### Lytle Park

*Create* new master plan

### Memorial Pioneer Cemetery

*Enhance* landscape and repair headstones

*Add* interpretive signs

### Miles Edwards

*Add* playground and service building

*Improve* trail system and access

*Redesign* parking area

### Oldenview

*Enhance* landscape, seating and fencing

*Work* in concert with adjacent owner

### Owls Nest

*Implement* Master Plan

### Harriett Beecher Stowe House

*Add* interpretive signs

*Create* new Master Plan for grounds

*Work* with State and Stowe House advocacy group

### Washington Park

*Create & implement* new Master Plan

### Wilson Commons

*Add* lighting and walkway to overlook



## PRESERVES & COMMUNITY GREENSPACES

### Preserves

#### Avon Woods

*Enhance* exhibits/displays at Nature Center

#### Brodbeck Preserve/Bracken Woods

*Enhance* trail system

#### Bradford-Felter Tanglewood

*Create* trail link to Fox Preserve, Mt. Airy & Greeno Woods

#### Buttercup Valley

*Seek* trail link out to Springlawn Avenue & potential link to LaBoiteaux Woods

#### Caldwell Nature Preserve

*Enhance* Nature Center building

#### California Woods

*Enhance* Nature Center building to better serve program functions

#### Edgewood Grove

*Create* trail link to Mt. Storm & Rawson Woods

#### Fox Preserve

*Create* trail link to Mt. Airy, Bradford & Greeno Woods

*Link* to Kirby Valley trail system and connect to North Bend Road

#### Glenway Woods

*Acquire* properties to add to preserve

*Enhance* trails and trail signs

#### Greeno Woods

*Create* trail link to Mt. Airy, Bradford, and LaBoiteaux

#### LaBoiteaux Woods

*Nature Center*, ADA improvements and enhancements

*Create* trail link to Greeno Woods & Mt. Airy

#### Magrish Preserve

*Enhance/extend* trail system up Little Miami River

#### Parker Woods

*Add* play equipment at Glen Parker Avenue

*Extend* walkway to school

#### Rawson Woods

*Create* trail link to Edgewood Grove

*Add* decorative iron fence to replace chain-link fence

#### Seymour Preserve

*Extend* trail to Caldwell and to Mill Creek



## COMMUNITY GREENSPACE

*Implement* the recommendations outlined in the Park Board's Natural Resource Management Plan.

*Collaborate* with other city departments to develop a strategy for vacant lots throughout the city.

*Incorporate appropriate* lots into proposed greenway expansions along hillsides and streams as permanent public greenspace.

*Develop temporary strategies* for cleanup and use until redevelopment is possible. Develop strategies for community gardens in conjunction with the Civic Garden Center and other partners.



## NEW & EXPANDED PARKS

Several new park and parkway opportunities associated with the urban core and expanded parkways network have been identified in this section. In addition to the new opportunities previously outlined, the following is a list of other new parks and expansion opportunities recommended.

### Other New Parks

Werk Road Park (if site is donated)

Anderson Ferry Park

Confluence Park at Mill Creek & Ohio River

Pocket Parks and Civic Plazas

New small parks/plazas are to be strategically located to support neighborhood business district revitalization and in conjunction with neighborhood redevelopment plans (such as Burnet Avenue Business District, College Hill Business District, Northside, and Mt. Washington, which have already expressed interest and/or incorporated new parks into neighborhood plans).

### Expansions of Parks

Based upon a system-wide analysis of potential property acquisitions in close proximity to existing parks, the following areas are recommended for consideration in addition to those that support the expanded parkways network.

California Woods

*Acquisition* of parcel at Salem and Kellogg

Stanbery

*Modest Expansion* out to Beechmont

Mount Airy

Diehl Road parcel/access and several sites connecting to LaBoiteaux Woods, including HCPD sites

Glenway Woods

Adjacent open space parcels

Ault Park

Adjacent hillside properties

Wilson Commons & Mount Echo

Adjacent hillside properties

Fleischmann

Expansion to North

Innwood

Expansion to South-West on Vine

Fairview

Expansion to Warner at Ravine

Muddy Creek

Open space site

*“New small PARKS/PLAZAS  
are to be... located to  
support NEIGHBORHOOD  
business district revitalization...”*



## ACQUISITION DIVESTMENT

Just as the potential acquisition of properties needs to be strategic and support existing sites and an expanded connective tissue, some parcels should also be considered for strategic sale. These are generally small parcels near parks that have been previously developed and could be considered for redevelopment, as well as small, independent, disconnected and/or otherwise low value sites that do not contribute significantly to the park system's network of assets.

The Park Board's policy over many years has been to acquire and protect greenspace or trade equally. This has been successful in producing a broadly distributed and significant amount of land holdings, but this also comes with the burden of added long-term maintenance. In challenging financial times, and based upon the system-wide evaluation that the amount of park land currently held is generally sufficient, the future land acquisition and sale strategies will be more about *quality, location and sustainable funding*. This will require new policies and new ways of working with partners.

An overview of these current acquisition and sale policies, criteria, recommendations and related issues follow:

- ▶ No park property is sold, leased or otherwise restricted unless such action enhances the park system or provides a greater level of park service. In general, the sale or lease of park property must result in more property being acquired for Parks than is sold (such as through land swaps), or Parks must obtain a sale/lease price in excess of appraised value when selling property or when granting an easement so that the funds can be used for park improvements or property purchases.
- ▶ Another consideration for sale or lease is if a buyer provides a direct park service as part of a transaction. The Park Board is charged by the City Charter to manage and control parklands and is the steward of these resources. Park property is generally not sold and not restricted in such a way that it would detract from its natural characteristics or restrict public access and use.



### Strategic Sale Criteria

Sale of park property is discouraged and will only be considered under special circumstances and in adherence to these guidelines. As may be appropriate, leases are preferred to sale of property. The value of sales, leases and easements should be at least equal to appraised value. Any consideration of less-than-appraised value requires that the Board obtain direct services, appropriate replacement properties or other consideration which exceeds appraised value.

For a piece of park property to be considered for divestment, it should not contain unique, scarce, or threatened natural or cultural resources.

### Most of the Following Conditions Should Apply:

- › There is community/public support for the sale
- › The property is not suitable for a specific park use of demonstrated value
- › The property can remain as open space in total or significant part even after divestiture
- › The property represents a threat to health, safety and welfare of the community as is
- › There is a higher and better use available, consistent with city plans and policies
- › The property is outside city limits
- › The property is unnecessarily duplicative of other park resources
- › The sale or lease of the property will result in increased park acreage due to a land swap or sale/lease proceeds sufficient to purchase additional parkland





### Acquisition Criteria

This plan calls for the protection of a number of properties located within designated parkway areas, and adjacent to a number of parks and preserves, in order to conserve natural resources and improve connectivity. Also, a small number of new parks and park expansions are proposed.

Acquisitions of properties and/or acquisition of conservation easements are recommended to come primarily through donations, partnership agreements such as those forged with the Hamilton County Park District, and to a lesser extent, through purchases as grants, gifts and public funds may become available.

### Acquisition Criteria Includes the Following:

- › The property contains unique, scarce, or threatened natural or cultural resources
- › The acquisition is consistent with the Master Plan
- › The property can remain green or be converted to greenspace, and this will support city and community plans
- › There is adequate funding to provide for maintenance and management of the property
- › There is community/public support for the acquisition
- › The property would be appropriate as a park or greenspace site and it can be made accessible to the public
- › There is a suitable use of demonstrated value
- › There is a clearly demonstrated need for additional parks or open space in the area
- › The property is contiguous to other park property and/or helps improve linkages between parks and greenspaces
- › The property is free of environmental hazards or other significant liability

*“This plan calls for the protection of properties to CONSERVE NATURAL RESOURCES.”*

*“Acquisitions of properties and conservation easements are recommended to come through DONATIONS, partnership AGREEMENTS and PURCHASES.”*



### Strategic Sale Recommendations

Analysis of park properties has resulted in the identification of several small sites which are deemed excess land and which meet the divestment criteria. These sites appear to offer development opportunities if sold, particularly for the development of new residential units, and their divestment would save park maintenance expenditures as well as return these sites to the tax rolls.

These sites, like the ones identified in the Uptown Parks and Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, should be considered on a case-by-case basis and evaluated based upon the criteria presented herein.

### Acquisition Recommendations

Analysis of properties throughout the city, but particularly within potential greenway areas along streams, hillsides and adjacent to parks and preserves resulted in the identification of many properties which should be considered for acquisition or other means of protection. The general location of these sites is represented in the Greenways section of this plan, although individual parcels have intentionally not been singled out to allow flexibility and proper negotiations to occur in concert with the Plan's intentions.



## A GREEN NETWORK

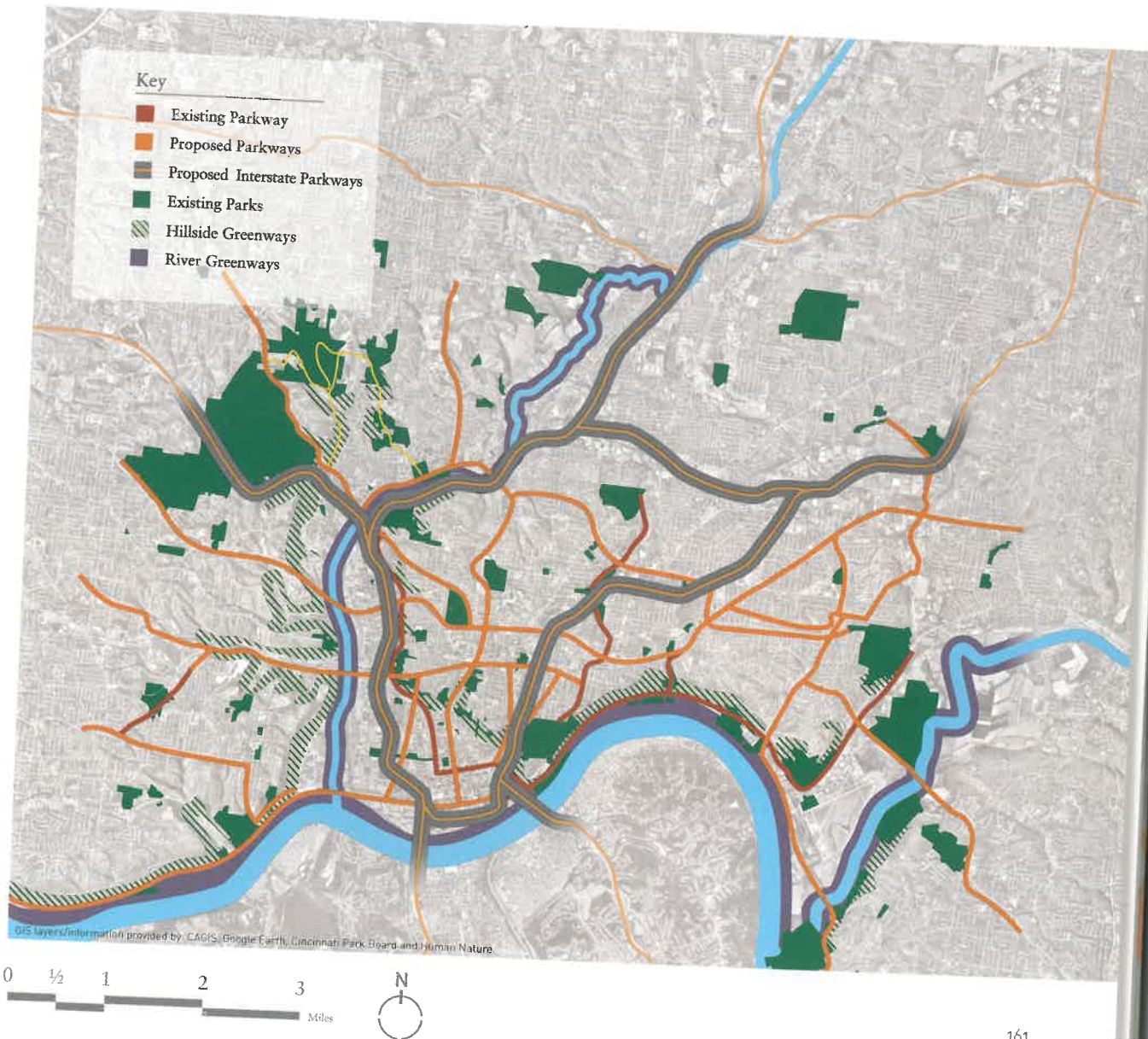


Kessler's 1907 Plan is most noted for starting Cincinnati Parks' network of connective parkways through the use of scenic drives and boulevards. The 1992 Plan expanded this network by proposing more parkway, greenway and trail linkages. Continuing to build this network, The Centennial Plan proposes *an expanded web of 21st Century Parkway and Greenways* that includes a more complete and connected network of both natural and built components.

### Features of this Network Include the Following:

- › A Completed Hillside Greenbelt System
- › A Connected System of Stream Corridors including:
  - Ohio River*
  - Little Miami River & Tributaries*
  - Mill Creek & Tributaries*
- › Embracing the Interstate System as Part of the Parkway Network
- › Additional landscaped boulevards and gateways
- › Enhanced Parkway and Boulevards

The execution of the green network will require long-term commitment and many partnerships. Once completed, it will reflect and celebrate the natural framework of our city, its geography and its primary roads. It will link all parts of the city through a web of green that is unparalleled by any American city. It will strengthen the environmental health, visual quality and economic value of the city as a whole as well as the properties along these corridors.





## AERIAL VIEW OF GREEN NETWORK

### Key

- Parkways/Boulevards
- Hillside Greenways
- River Greenways
- Proposed Interstate Parkways



*“This EXPANDED PARKWAYS network will link all parts of the city through a WEB OF GREEN.”*



## PARKWAYS & BOULEVARDS

The Plan advocates expanding the traditional network of road-related parkways and boulevards in keeping with the original intentions of the Kessler Plan. There are several dimensions to these expanded parkways that will be key to their success. As consideration is given to enhancing existing roadway landscapes and designating these corridors as new parkways, the following criteria apply:

- ▶ They should be significant roadways in the city-wide roadways network, not secondary or tertiary streets, with a first priority given to the streets already identified in the Plan.
- ▶ The corridor should have inherent scenic potential. This may include landscape scenery, architectural scenery or some combination.
- ▶ There needs to be connective intent in the corridor, linking parks, landmarks and major geographic districts of the city.
- ▶ There needs to be a right-of-way of existing or potential scale to accommodate parkway and/or boulevard enhancements.
- ▶ Each new parkway corridor should have a design plan created that demonstrates the proposed landscape enhancements in more detail prior to implementation. These enhancements should be compatible with the spirit of existing parkways in the city, but also with features and amenities that are site-specific.
- ▶ The parkway plans should be coordinated and integrated with the Park Board's street tree and neighborhood reforestation programs.
- ▶ The parkway plans should integrate as many of the following dimensions as is reasonably possible: street trees, forested/native planting areas, stormwater best management practices, trails and other forms of alternative transportation, open lawns or meadows, ornamental landscaped areas, decorative lighting and furnishings, public art features, neighborhood/district gateways, architectural features, and/or wayfinding/signs.
- ▶ All of these elements should be consistent with Park Board standards and design approval processes. The Park Board should coordinate all new parkway projects with other public agencies to insure maximum efficiency and integration with other initiatives related to transportation, neighborhood revitalization, utility/infrastructure enhancements, and environmental preservation or restoration.
- ▶ To the extent possible, the Park Board should seek out and secure partnerships with other city agencies and property owners in these corridors to assist in a holistic strategy for funding the proper and long-term maintenance of the corridor. This should be a key determinant in the feasibility and timing of any new parkway project.
- ▶ Expand the network of parkways, boulevards and gateways
- ▶ Implement the Interstate Greenways Plan per the 2004-2024 Natural Resource Management Plan

A full investigation and articulation of these objectives will assist new parkways in providing maximum value to the park system, as well as the city environment as a whole.

## Existing Parkways

Our existing network of parkways is an important legacy of the 1907 Kessler Plan, and future generations will continue to be stewards of this important resource. As such, continued focus, maintenance and enhancements will be necessary to preserve this legacy and serve their originally intended purpose of connecting parks and other civic assets via scenic and environmentally friendly corridors of travel. With these broad objectives in mind and current needs better in focus, further study, planning and minor upgrades are recommended for several existing Parkways, including:

## Central Parkway

*Implement master plan* for section between Downtown and OTR and seek support for unfunded portions related to additional plantings, public art, interpretive elements and Vine Street Gateway enhancements.

*Investigate linking* to Gilbert Avenue Greenway.

*Create Master Plan* for remaining corridor that addresses gaps in tree canopy, opportunities for streetscape enhancements (lighting, walls, interpretive features, pavement, wayfinding, public art & special planting areas), ADA accessibility, improved linkages to/from neighborhoods, improved transit accommodations and the possibility of better accommodations for cycling.



Columbia Parkway from the 5th Street Viaduct at Martin Drive







### Columbia Parkway

*Continue implementation* of viewshed management recommendations, landscape enhancement/gateway recommendations and identity/wayfinding recommendations from previous studies.

*Collaborate with* other city departments on continued upgrades related to walls, lighting and streetscape enhancements.

### Torrence Parkway

*Continue landscape enhancements* as private funds are identified.

### Victory Parkway

*Continue collaborative enhancements* with Xavier University.

*Create master plan* that addresses gaps in tree canopy, opportunities for streetscape enhancements (lighting, walls, pavement, wayfinding, public art & special planting areas), ADA accessibility, improved linkages to/from neighborhoods, improved transit accommodations and the possibility of better accommodations for cycling.

### Rapid Run Parkway

*Create master plan* that addresses gaps in tree canopy, opportunities for streetscape enhancements (lighting, walls, pavement, wayfinding, public art & special planting areas), ADA accessibility, improved linkages to/from neighborhoods, improved transit accommodations and the possibility of better accommodations for cycling.

## NATURAL SYSTEMS & GREENWAYS

Several expansions/refinements to the network of greenways are proposed.

### Hillside Greenways

*Collaborate with* Hillside Trust, Western Wildlife Corridor and other partners to obtain property or conservation easements, donations, development controls, and as needed, acquisition of key properties that link the system.

*Collaborate with* other city departments and Hillside Trust to implement recommendations of the City Viewshed Study.

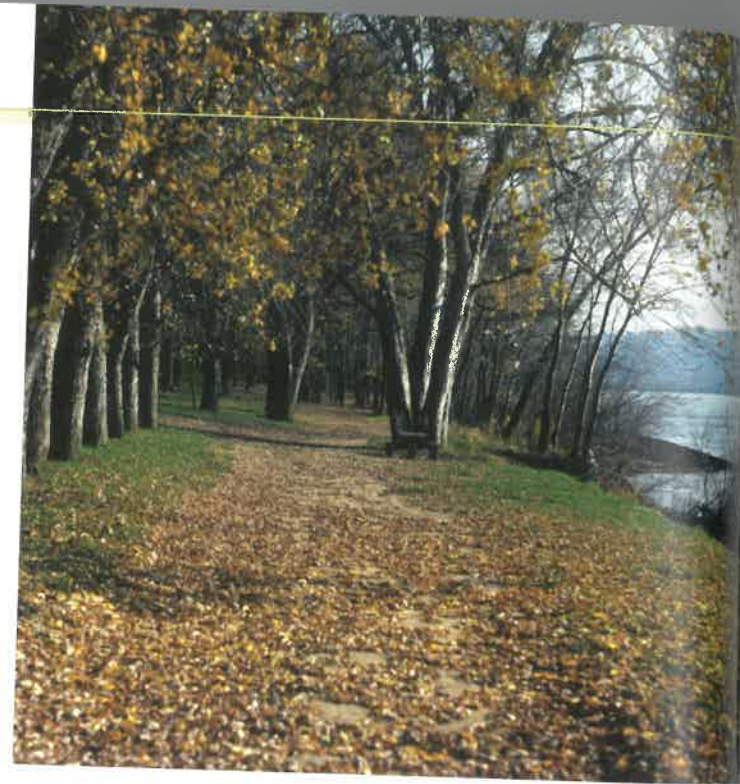
### River & Stream Corridor Greenways

*Collaborate with* the Ohio River Way, Corps of Engineers, Ohio, Kentucky, & Indiana Regional Council (OKI), CDOE, Hamilton County Park District, Little Miami Inc. (LMI), Mill Creek Restoration Project, Rivers Unlimited and other partners to acquire and manage a continuous network of linked greenspaces along the city's major stream corridors via ownership, easements, trails, watershed plans, riparian buffers and other mechanisms.

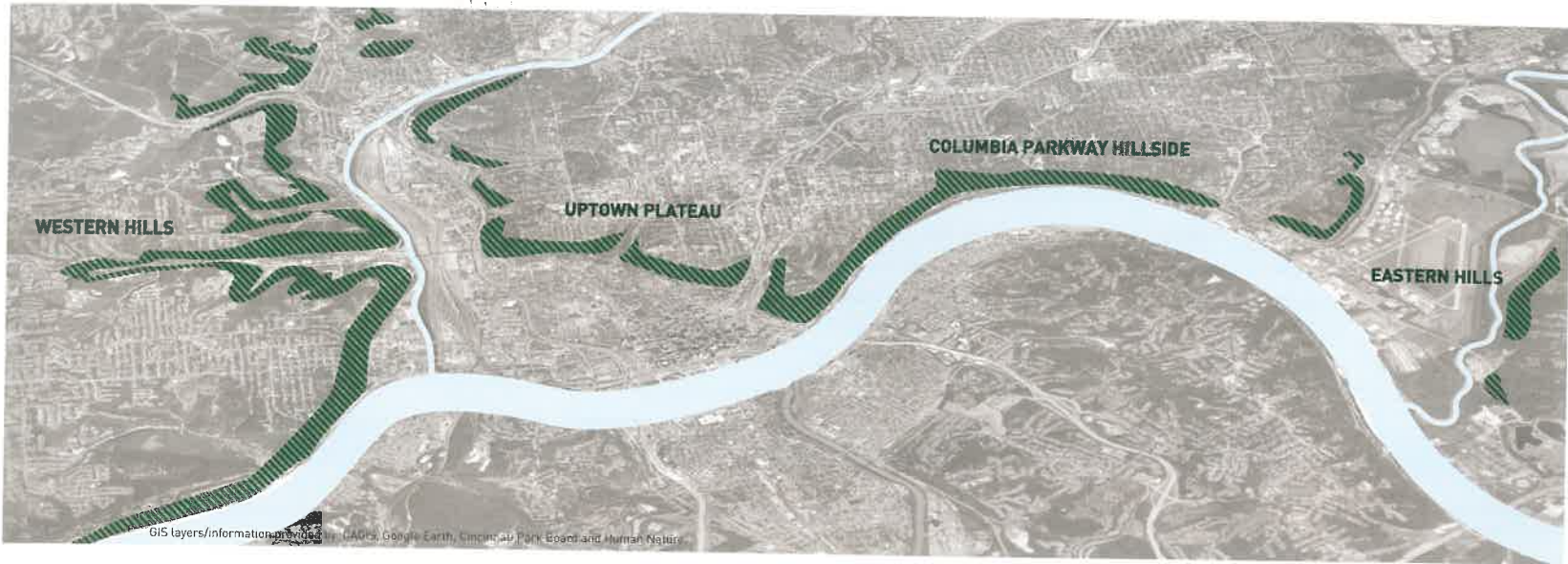
*Play a proactive partnership role* in the completion of the Ohio River Trail Plan and the Mill Creek Greenway Plan, as well as their implementation and management, in collaboration with the other partners.

The Centennial Plan represents the expanded network of parkways and greenways as a long-term goal of connectivity on many levels. Working with partners throughout the region to advocate for linkages, negotiate land purchases and easements, and articulate trails and restorative strategies, this expanded network will ultimately achieve Kessler's original intention of a fully connected system, as well as meet contemporary needs related to air and water quality.

These strategies will require creativity and an eye toward our legacy for the future. Just as it took several decades for the parkways Kessler proposed to come into being, so too will these expansions. But just as previous generations recognized the value of Kessler's vision, and we have been the beneficiaries of their commitment, so too will our continued investment in this vision leave a legacy for future generations that will help maintain Cincinnati's reputation as one of the top urban park systems in America.



## HILLSIDES



## STREAM | RIVER CORRIDORS



# CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT BUDGET

## SUSTAINING SYSTEM WIDE IMPROVEMENTS

	2007-08	2009-10	2011-12	2013-14	2015-16	2017-18	2019-20	2021-26	Private Funding	Joint Venture	Other Public	Total
Existing Building Improvements	2,186,000	1,910,000	2,137,200	2,137,200	2,137,200	2,000,000	2,000,000	6,000,000	—	—	—	\$20,507,600
Green Infrastructure [landscape   reforest   revegetation]	740,000	740,000	740,000	740,000	740,000	700,000	700,000	2,100,000	—	—	—	\$7,200,000
Circulation [roads   sidewalks   trails]	1,308,255	1,351,566	1,309,312	1,309,312	1,309,312	1,000,000	1,000,000	3,000,000	100,000	—	—	\$11,687,757
Site Structures [retaining walls   etc.]	665,000	917,000	859,000	859,000	859,000	800,000	800,000	2,400,000	—	—	—	\$8,159,000
Other Infrastructure [utilities   art   signs   furnishings]	740,000	800,000	788,571	788,571	788,571	700,000	700,000	2,100,000	100,000	—	—	\$7,505,713
Site   Facility Development	3,250,000	3,200,000	2,600,000	2,600,000	2,600,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	6,000,000	—	—	—	\$24,250,000
Engineering   Design   Construction Management	1,000,000	1,050,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	800,000	800,000	2,400,000	—	—	—	\$9,050,000
<b>Total Yearly Sustaining Improvements</b>	<b>\$9,889,255</b>	<b>\$9,968,566</b>	<b>\$9,434,083</b>	<b>\$9,434,083</b>	<b>\$9,434,083</b>	<b>\$8,000,000</b>	<b>\$8,000,000</b>	<b>\$24,000,000</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>—</b>	

**Total Sustaining Improvements** \$88,360,070

The above capital items are related to yearly capital projects which maintain, repair or update the physical plant of Park Board Facilities.

## NEW INITIATIVES

	2007-08	2009-10	2011-12	2013-14	2015-16	2017-18	2019-20	2021-26	Private Funding	Joint Venture	Other Public	Total
<b>Downtown &amp; Over-the-Rhine</b>												
Master Plan Lytle Park	—	—	2,200,000	—	—	—	—	—	2,162,000	200,000	100,000	\$4,662,000
Master Plan Washington Park	200,000	4,062,000	3,500,000	—	—	—	—	—	8,000,000	—	500,000	\$16,262,000
Broadway Commons	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,900,000	1,750,000	3,500,000	—	—	\$7,150,000
St. Xavier District Park	—	—	62,000	1,000,000	—	—	—	—	1,000,000	—	—	\$2,062,000
Convention Center District Park	—	—	—	—	62,000	1,000,000	—	—	1,000,000	—	—	\$2,062,000
Pocket Parks in OTR	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	415,000	375,000	—	—	\$790,000
<b>Krohn Conservatory Expansion</b>												
Capital Costs	—	3,525,000	8,000,000	8,975,000	—	—	—	—	16,500,000	5,000,000	—	\$42,000,000
<b>Central Riverfront Park</b>												
Capital Costs	10,000,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	26,500,000	—	53,500,000	\$90,000,000
<b>Uptown Park Renewals</b>												
Burnet Woods	500,000	1,677,000	1,677,000	—	—	—	—	—	3,771,500	1,579,500	—	\$9,205,000
Inwood Park	—	—	—	2,010,000	2,620,000	—	—	—	4,000,000	1,313,000	610,000	\$10,553,000
Jackson Hill Park	—	—	—	—	174,000	—	—	—	1,033,000	—	500,000	\$1,707,000
Fairview Park	—	—	—	—	—	3,732,000	—	—	2,000,000	—	700,000	\$6,432,000
Bellevue Hill Park	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,449,000	—	1,000,000	—	—	\$2,449,000
Fleischmann Gardens	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	850,000	800,000	—	—	\$1,650,000

## NEW INITIATIVES

	2007-08	2009-10	2011-12	2013-14	2015-16	2017-18	2019-20	2021-26	Private Funding	Joint Venture	Other Public	Total
<b>Trails</b>												
Allocation for Furthering Trail System	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	600,000	—	—	500,000	\$2,500,000
<b>Regional Parks</b>												
Mt. Airy Forest	—	2,250,000	1,740,000	—	—	—	—	—	1,000,000	1,586,000	—	\$6,576,000
The Gardens of Eden	—	—	—	1,300,000	1,100,000	—	—	—	840,000	—	—	\$3,240,000
Ault Park	—	—	—	—	340,000	400,000	—	—	1,000,000	—	—	\$1,740,000
French Park	—	—	—	—	1,625,000	—	—	—	—	—	1,625,000	\$3,250,000
Armleder   Little Miami River Park	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3,000,000	\$3,000,000
<b>Large Neighborhood Parks</b>												
Master Plan Recommendations	161,500	323,000	323,000	323,000	323,000	—	—	—	100,000	—	—	\$1,553,500
<b>Small Neighborhood Parks</b>												
Master Plan Recommendations	446,000	446,000	446,000	446,000	446,000	—	—	—	400,000	—	—	\$2,630,000
<b>Preserves &amp; Natural Area Sites</b>												
Master Plan Recommendations	140,000	120,000	120,000	120,000	120,000	120,000	—	—	100,000	—	600,000	\$1,440,000
<b>Expansion of Parks</b>												
Master Plan Recommended Property Acquisition	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000	—	—	—	1,000,000	—	—	\$3,000,000

## NEW INITIATIVES

	2007-08	2009-10	2011-12	2013-14	2015-16	2017-18	2019-20	2021-26	Private Funding	Joint Venture	Other Public	Total
<b>New Parks</b>												
Werk Road Park	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	TBD
Anderson Ferry Park	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	TBD
Mill Creek Ohio Confluence Park	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	TBD
<b>Parkway Development</b>												
Landscape Improvement	582,500	1,165,000	1,165,000	1,165,000	1,165,000	--	--	--	582,500	-	-	\$5,825,000
<b>Exotic Species Control</b>												
Honeysuckle Eradication	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	--	--	--	--	--	--	\$500,000
Deer Population Control	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	TBD
<b>Totals For non-City Funding</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$76,664,000	\$9,678,500	\$61,635,000	\$148,177,500
<b>Total For City Funding</b>	\$12,730,000	\$14,268,000	\$19,933,000	\$16,039,000	\$8,475,000	\$5,452,000	\$3,549,000	\$3,615,000	--	--	--	\$172,421,070

**Total For All Capital Improvement Sources**      \$320,598,570

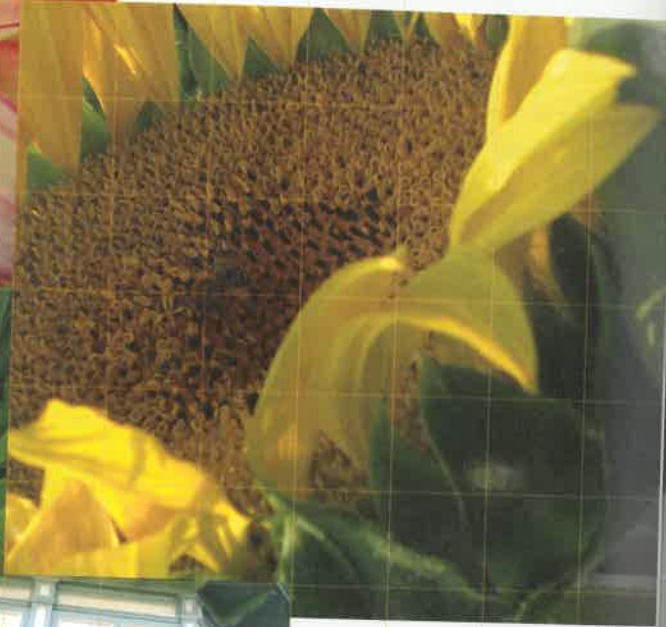
# IMPLEMENTATION

- 174 ACTION STEPS
- 178 OPERATING BUDGET
- 179 FUNDING MATRIX

AN ACTION PLAN



# 5



..... *prioritize, schedule & implement*

# ACTION STEPS

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES</b>										
1 Hire Executive Director of Foundation										
2 Work with City Council to create Dedicated Tax										
3 Work with PAC to Educate public on Dedicated Tax										
4 Reorganization; Create Program & Business Division										
5 Coordination & Expansion of Volunteerism										
6 Foundation, Hire PR & Marketing Staff										
7 Foundation, Hire Graphic Design Staff										
8 Enhance/Add key staff: Superv., Facil., Constr., Mngement, Tree Crew, Constr. Crew, L. Arch., Nature Ed., GIS										
9 Study creation Horticulture Section with Superv. Florist										
10 Increasing the number & scope of programs & events										
11 Broadening the reach of nature education										
12 Enhance and promote PR & Marketing Initiatives										
<b>OPERATIONS &amp; LAND MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES</b>										
1 Deer Management										
2 Invasive Species Control										
3 Work toward Stormwater Partnerships & fees										
4 Expand Street Tree Program with stepped increase in assessments										
5 Sustainability Principles & Projects										
6 Protecting & Linking Natural Resource systems										
7 Civic Beautification Projects & Partnerships										
8 Neighborhood Reforestation										

<b>FUNDING &amp; PARTNERSHIP PRIORITIES</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
1 Stabilize Tax revenue by refocusing City revenue stream										
2 Incremental reasonable increase in Fee Schedule										
3 Maintain a balance of free & fee facilities & services										
4 Incremental reasonable increase in Fund Raising										
5 Enhanced volunteer program										
6 Expand Partnerships with Education Institutions										
7 Expand Partnerships with development entities										
8 Expand Partnerships with other Park Service Providers										
9 Develop Restaurant in Burnet Woods										
10 Develop Wedding Corporate Meeting Facility in Inwood										
11 Enhance Meeting Facility at Mt. Airy										
12 Implement Krohn Conservatory Expansion										
13 Seek greater efficiencies with CRC & HCPD										
14 Develop partnerships for creation of regional trails										
15 Investigate & create model Park Improvement District										
16 Investigate & create model for Park TIF use										

# ACTION STEPS

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS	2007-08	2009-10	2011-12	2013-14	2015-16	2017-18	2019-20	2021-22	2023-24	2025-26
1 Sustaining Park Infrastructure	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
2 Create Master Plan Lytle Park	█									
3 Implement Lytle Park Plan			█							
4 Create Master Plan Washington Park	█									
5 Implement Washington Park Plan		█	█							
6 Develop plans for new Downtown Parks			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
7 Develop plans for new Neighborhood Parks & Squares		█	█							
8 Construct Cincinnati Riverfront Park	█	█	█	█	█					
9 Implement Owls Nest Park Plan	█	█								
10 Create Master Plan/Feasibility Study for Krohn Expansion		█								
11 Construct Krohn Conservatory Expansion			█	█						
12 Implement Burnet Woods Master Plan	█	█	█							
13 Implement Inwood Park Master Plan				█	█					
14 Implement Jackson Hill Master Plan					█					
15 Implement Bellevue Hill Master Plan							█			

<b>CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>2009-10</b>	<b>2011-12</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2025-26</b>
16 Implement Fairview Master Plan										
17 Implement Fleischmann Master Plan										
18 Create Master Plan for Mt. Airy Forest & Arboretum										
19 Implement Mt. Airy Master Plan & Renovation										
20 Create Master Plan for Gardens of Eden										
21 Implement Gardens of Eden Master Plan										
22 Reassess & Implement French Park Master Plan										
23 Improvements at Large Neighborhood Parks										
24 Improvements at Small Neighborhood Parks										
25 Preserves & Natural Areas Improvements										
26 Property Acquisition										
27 Parkway/Boulevard/Greenway Development										
28 Ohio River Greenway										
29 Riverfront Parks										
30 Trails										

# OPERATING BUDGET

Dates Levels	Base		2007		2008		2009		2010		2011	
	Budget	Staff	Budget	Staff	Budget	Staff	Budget	Staff	Budget	Staff	Budget	Staff
Director's Office	193,442.0	2	193,442.0	2	193,442.0	2	193,442.0	2	193,442.0	2	193,442.0	2
Park Operations Division	6,315,729.0	96.05	6,315,729.0	96.05	6,517,119.0	101.05	6,715,253.0	106.05	6,886,347.0	114.05	6,886,347.0	110.50
Planning & Programs	3,190,742.0	54.15	3,190,742.0	54.15	3,256,086.0	55.15	3,360,480.0	57.15	3,449,447.0	59.15	3,504,348.0	60.15
Operating Budget	9,699,913.0	152.2	9,699,913.0	152.2	9,966,647.0	158.2	10,269,175.0	165.2	10,529,236.0	171.2	10,584,137.0	172.65
Additional Operation Costs due to Facilities			25,000.0		50,000.0		925,000.0		1,100,000.0		1,125,000.0	
Adjusted Operating Budget due to Inflation			3.50%		3.50%		3.50%		3.50%		3.50%	
<b>Total Projected Operations Budget</b>			\$9,725,788.0		\$10,018,397.0		\$11,226,550.0		\$11,667,736.0		\$11,748,512.0	

This figure takes into account the additional operating dollars due to Central Riverfront Park Phase 1 and Uptown Parks.

This figure includes the addition of staff as suggested in the Master Plan narrative.

The above budgets would be funded from all sources, including General Funds, Street Trees, CI Reimburs, Revenue Funds, P.E. Reimb, and any Development Agreement Funds

# FUNDING MATRIX

COMPONENTS	City Capital	City General Fund / Operating	Other City Operating	Street Tree Assessment	User Fees	Other Local Public CIP (County, HCPD, MSD)	Other Local Public Operating	State	Federal	Private / Donations	Sponsorships	In-Kind / Volunteer	Partnerships / Collaborations	Development Agreements / Special Improvement Districts	Rentals / Other Fees & Charges
Operations / Maintenance															
Programs / Events															
Parkways															
Greenways / Trails															
Forestry / Street Trees															
Park Improvements															
<i>Landscape / Horticulture / Grounds</i>															
<i>Facilities / Buildings</i>															
<i>Infrastructure</i>															
Land Acquisition															

The 2007 Master Plan builds on the strong foundation of history and a high standard of excellence. Community input has been the major force driving the plan and its new initiatives.

The central theme of the plan is the belief that parks and greenspace can drive city revitalization and regional growth. The plan recommends new facilities and renovated parks, a network of parkways and greenways, an environmentally and financially sustainable park system, programs and services to serve the community, and the funding and mechanisms to make this all happen over the next ten to twenty years.

*“The new Master Plan  
continues the HISTORY  
of INNOVATIVE PLANNING.”*





