



playokc  
parks & recreation

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**KIDS AT A SPLASH PAD**

The simple joy of kids playing in water symbolizes the importance of parks and recreation to Oklahoma City. Our city provides a good place to live and work, but it is also a place that we can take delight in. Our citizens' health and productivity is related to their happiness, and an important function of our parks is to make people happy.



## Our Situation

Oklahoma City's first city plan revolved around parks: W.H. Dunn's concept in 1910 of four great parks in the corners of the young metropolis, connected by a circumferential parkway. Much of Dunn's legacy still exists. The four corner parks are now Lincoln Park (Northeast), Will Rogers Park (Northwest), Woodson Park (Southwest), and Trosper Park (Southeast), and many segments of Grand Boulevard still serve their neighborhoods as both transportation facilities and green spaces. But the city has grown well beyond the reach of what were its far corners, and the city has historically struggled with providing good park service to its periphery. Lakes Hefner, Overholser, and Stanley Draper added major open space and recreational resources, and more recently, the Oklahoma River greenway has created a signature recreational and trail feature through the middle of the city. But despite these important facilities, in 2013 the Trust for Public Lands ranked Oklahoma City's park system 43rd among the fifty largest American cities, based on such key factors as acreage, park size, park access, playgrounds, and public spending.

Recognizing the importance of parks and recreation to our quality of life, the City and the Oklahoma City Community Foundation commissioned a Parks Master Plan as part of the **planokc** process. The introduction to this plan, which included substantial public input and surveying, speaks to "a strong, new

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

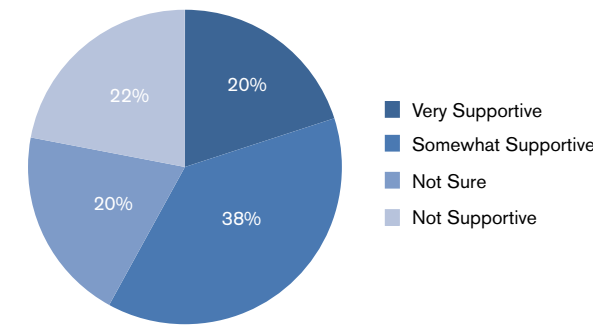
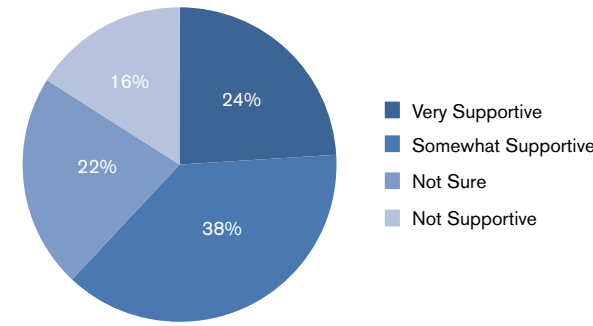
**playokc** is the parks and recreation element of **planokc**. It draws heavily on the work completed during both the **planokc** and Parks Master Plan processes to identify how to develop and fund the open space and recreation needs of the growing city. This element outlines how both public and private spaces should meet public demands for a variety of parks, open spaces, and recreational programs, and defines the responsibilities of the public and private entities charged with their development and maintenance.

### Funding, Maintenance, and Operations

**Funding.** Recent funding approval for new park investments, including the MAPS 3 Park in the Core

to Shore redevelopment area, trail projects, and general obligation bonds for park improvements, has demonstrated public support for park and recreation funding. Yet, Oklahoma City's park system has historically been underfunded compared to peer cities. In 2012, the Parks Department's per capita budget of about \$40 compares to \$65-70 for a group of comparable Midwestern cities according to the Parks Master Plan. Despite substantial bond funding for park improvements, the City does not have a permanent, dedicated fund for capital improvements, often necessary to replace smaller items. By comparison, "best practice cities" cited by the Parks Master Plan spend 3 to 4% of their total asset value on facilities and infrastructure. Oklahoma City also ranks low on informal recreational activities (\$8.42 per capita compared to an average of \$20 per capita).

**Maintenance.** The cost of maintaining existing parks is increasing, especially as facilities age, but Oklahoma City's level of maintenance expenditures are considered very low in comparison to peer cities. Depending on the classification of parks, typical maintenance expenditures are between 40 and 60% of its peers. The Parks Master Plan found that most of the city's park system is maintained at a "Mode III" level according to the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) maintenance standards, again well below the typical level in comparable Midwestern communities.



**SUPPORT FOR PARKS FUNDING**  
 (Top) Public support for higher user fees to fund parks, recreation facilities, and trails  
 (Bottom) Public support for higher taxes to fund parks, recreation facilities, and trails

A majority of the Oklahoma City community supports increased taxes and some increases in user fees to fund parks, recreation facilities, and trails, according to a statistically significant community survey.

*Parks Master Plan (2013)*

**Revenue Sources.** A complicating factor for Oklahoma City is the fact that property tax dollars can only be used for capital projects. Maintenance and operations must be funded by other sources, typically sales tax revenues. Economic downturns, changing buying patterns (including on-line sales), and regional competition for market share all affect the availability of funds for maintenance and operations.

Interestingly, the Parks Master Plan's community survey indicated that citizens are willing to pay more for park investments and services. About 62% support at least some tax increase and 58% supported some increase in user fees to pay for parks, trails, and recreation facilities.

### Programming and Facility Needs

Evolving preferences and economic conditions appear to have both changed and increased demands on local park facilities. A growing interest in stay-at-home vacations has increased demand for nearby facilities that do not require out of town travel. Public interest has also grown for such specialized facilities as dog parks, skate parks, and rowing courses. The growing popularity of sports like soccer has also created demands on parks that were designed around other, more "traditional" activities.

**Demographics.** Demographics have also had an impact. For example, older adults, growing as a percentage of total population, have new recreational needs, although the conventional concept of "senior centers" and age-segregated facilities is becoming less likely to appeal to aging baby-boomers. Increases in ethnic populations also increase demands for specific sports, as evidenced again by the high utilization of soccer fields.

**Replacement.** In Oklahoma City and other cities, many major facilities, notably swimming pools and recreation centers, were built at the same time and are reaching the point of needing major repair or reinvestment. The outdoor public swimming pools of the 1960s and 1970s do not respond well to the needs of either serious

Priority Parks & Facilities	Priority Programs	Priority Actions
1. Walking and Biking Trails	1. Adult Fitness / Wellness Programs	1. Upgrade Neighborhood Parks
2. Indoor Pool / Leisure Pool	2. Special Events / Festivals	2. Build New Walking / Biking Trails
3. Small Neighborhood Parks	3. Senior Programs	3. Upgrade Community Parks
4. Indoor Fitness / Exercise Facilities	4. Walking / Biking Groups	4. Develop New Senior Wellness Centers
5. Large Community Parks	5. Family Programs	5. Purchase Land for Neighborhood Parks

## CITYWIDE PARK AND FACILITY NEEDS

Source: Oklahoma City Parks Master Plan, 2013

swimmers or more informal users, and are expensive to replace or rebuild. In many situations, water playgrounds or splash parks have served local needs with lower capital and long-term maintenance costs.

**Community Needs.** The community survey, completed as part of the Parks Master Plan process, provides particularly useful information on trends in recreational needs and preferences among Oklahoma City residents. Despite the attention typically given to organized sports and major activities, the highest facility priorities tended to focus on less formal, individual activities and linkages. Across all parts of the city, the highest facility priority was walking and biking trails (38% of the sample); the highest program priority was adult fitness and wellness programs (22%); and the highest action priority was upgrading neighborhood parks (28%).

### Levels of Service

The Park Master Plan analyzed levels of park service for four Level of Service Tiers:

- Central City, including the area enclosed by the historic Grand Boulevard loop.
- Urban Area, including developed areas outside the central city.

- Urban Growth Area, including areas designated for growth, and generally corresponding to the area that either has or can be feasibly served by urban infrastructure like city water and sewer.
- Rural Area, including the balance of the corporate limits.

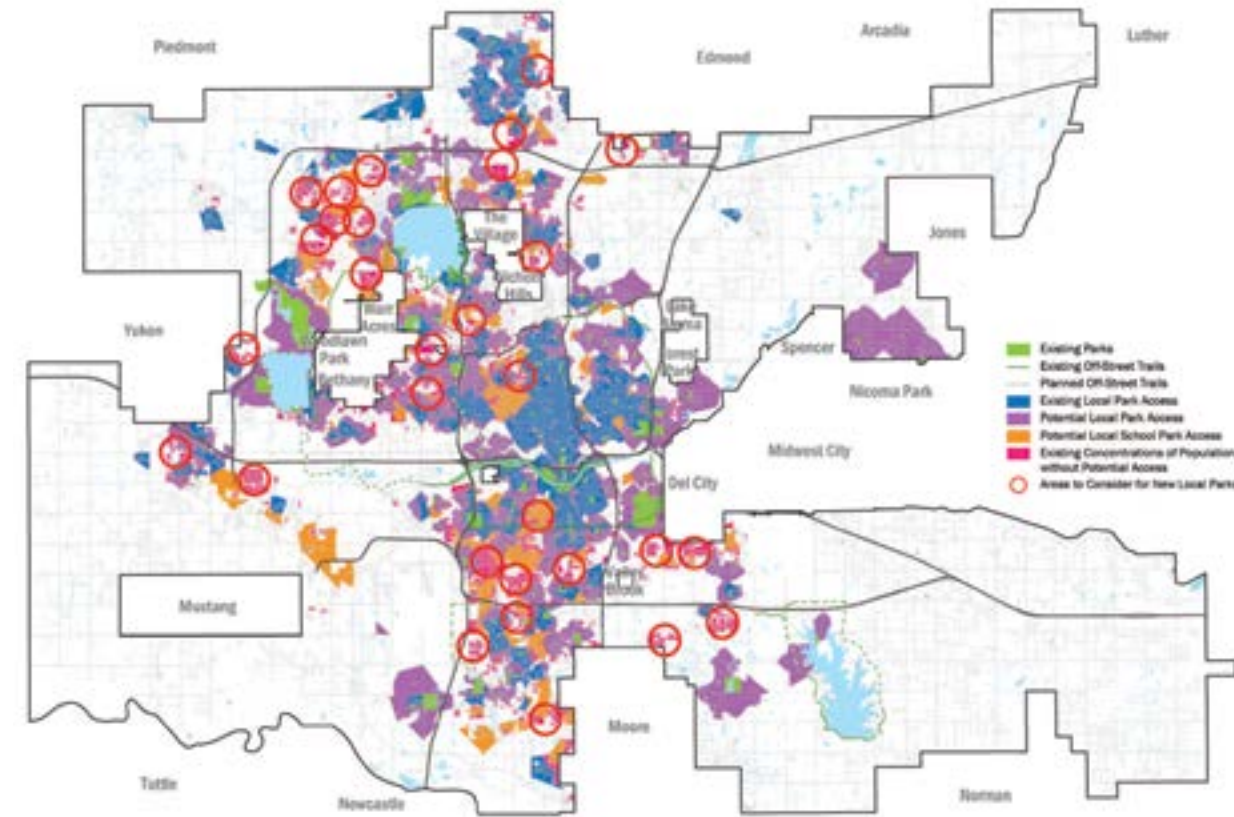
Using current population trends, the analysis found that most existing parks are located in areas that are expected to be either stable or lose population to 2030, and that areas expected to gain substantial population are relatively lacking in park service. It further established service standards for local parks, regional parks, and trails for each of the tiers and concluded that:

- Within the Central City Tier, most areas were well served by all three levels of facilities (local parks, regional parks, and trails).
- Within the Urban Area, most areas were well served by local parks, but only some areas met service standards for regional parks and trails.
- Within the Urban Growth Area, few areas were well served by local and regional parks, and even fewer were well served by trails.
- Within the Rural Area, very few areas were well served by any type of facility.

It is important to note that the Parks Master Plan based its analysis on current development trends. The preferred "Efficiency" growth scenario (see Chapter 1) (favoring infill, higher density and mixed use development, and less expansion at the city edge) is likely to reduce the need for new open spaces at the outer edge of the Urban Growth Area and require new parks in that sector contiguous to existing development. It will also increase utilization of parks and suggest a need for a trail network in the Central City and Urban Areas. The master plan analysis also did not consider issues of maintenance or serviceability of specific parks. The Efficiency Scenario suggests a greater need for rehabilitation and enhancement of parks within the existing urbanized areas

## LOCAL PARK SERVICE

Areas of Oklahoma City currently or potentially well-served by local parks.



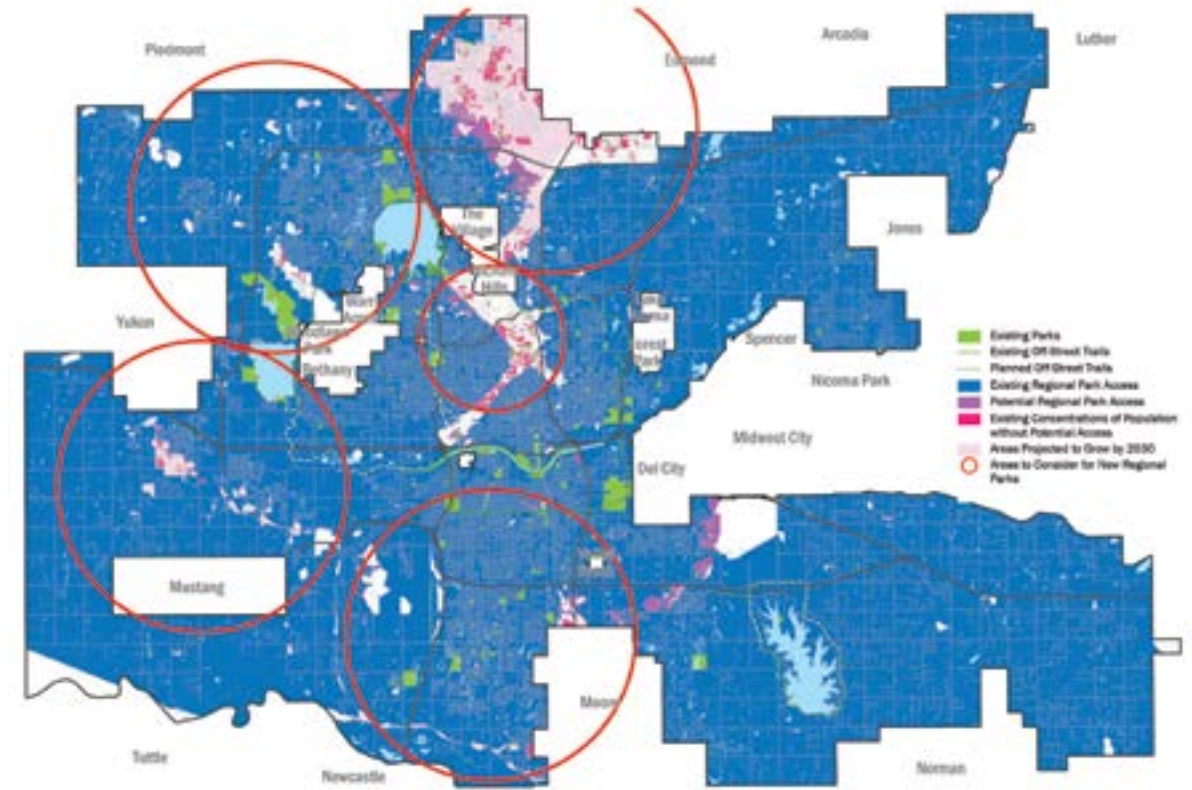
## Accessibility and Use

Health and wellness issues among our population as a whole and young people in particular have sparked greater and broader interest in active transportation. While active transportation planners often focus on commuting, many studies show that citizens consider parks and recreation facilities to be the highest priority destinations for bicycle and pedestrian travel. Safe pedestrian and bicycle connections make people less dependent on cars (and parents) for access to recreational facilities and, in effect, extend service areas for individual facilities.



## REGIONAL PARK SERVICE

Areas of Oklahoma City currently or potentially well-served by regional parks.



The Oklahoma City Parks Master Plan found that a significant majority of people were willing to walk or bike for at least a 20-minute distance, or a mile on foot, to a park. However, a majority did not consider themselves within walking distance of a park. For comparison, about 54% of the sample would be willing to drive 20 minutes or more to a park – about the same travel time as walking a mile or cycling three to four miles.

## Safety and Design

People will avoid parks that they consider unsafe; and lack of use in turn makes parks less safe and reinforces the cycle of perception creating reality. Appropriate design, landscaping, lighting, views, and emergency features in parks and along trails all contribute to a feeling of comfort that generates the greatest possible safety measure: desirable human activity. The concept of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), promoted by such organizations as the U.S. Department of Justice and the National Crime Prevention Association, established principles to guide design in public places. The Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Department currently follows these principles.

## Social and Environmental Effects

In the past, parks and recreation have been considered to be a community quality issue, important to the city but always somehow secondary to “essential” infrastructure like streets and sewers. Thus, when budgets get tight, park development and maintenance can be one of the first things to be cut or deferred. But national concerns about the economic and human impacts of increased incidence of obesity and its resulting effects on health have changed many of these perceptions. The causes of the dramatic increases in rates of overweight and obesity are undoubtedly complex and are almost certainly not the result of any single factor. But it is clear that a

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**PRINCIPLES OF CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN**

**NATURAL SURVEILLANCE**

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

**ACCESS MANAGEMENT**

Guiding people by using signs, well-marked entrances and exits, and landscaping. It may also include limiting access to certain areas by using real or symbolic barriers.

**TERRITORIALITY**

Clear delineation of space, expressions of pride or ownership, and the creation of a welcoming environment.

**PHYSICAL MAINTENANCE**

Repair and general upkeep of space, such as removing graffiti in restrooms in a timely manner and making the necessary repairs to restrooms, light fixtures, and stairways to maintain safety and comfort.

**ORDER MAINTENANCE**

Attending to minor unacceptable acts and providing measures that clearly state acceptable behavior.



decline in routine physical activity correlates strongly to increasing rates of obesity. This national epidemic is of particular significance to our children. Concerted efforts to publicize the benefits of both healthy diet and increased activity have begun to bear fruit. According to a study by the Centers for Disease Control in early 2014, childhood obesity rates seem to be leveling off. That is good news, but much more work needs to be done.

As we have seen, this trend has proven to be particularly vexing for Oklahoma City. According to the American Fitness Index (AFI) in 2013, we rank 48th in personal health, 42nd in community health factors, and last overall among America's fifty largest cities. Almost 30% of our population has reported no significant physical activity during the 30-day period before the survey. The AFI placed the city's obesity rate at 30.1%. Active living facilities, including parks and recreation, are a significant part of the solution to this condition that imperils our overall goal of community health and sustainability.

Nationwide, household health is also strongly related to income and ethnicity factors, which are in turn highly

related to each other. Lower-income households are especially reliant on the condition and usability of parks. The Parks Master Plan shows that these relationships also hold true in Oklahoma City. The city's African-American and Hispanic populations tend to live in the northeast and south-central parts of the city. These areas also exhibit the lowest median incomes and lowest health score concentrations.

**Our Plan**

We know from the issues discussed above that playokc is not just about play and leisure time, but is very critical to the city's health, quality, and sustainability. Our program for achieving a quality park and recreation system begins with recognizing the need for stable and adequate resources for the system and the most efficient use of those resources. This effort will increasingly require a partnership of public and private sectors, and a renewed dedication to providing our citizens with access to the facilities they need to maintain a healthy lifestyle. We have developed and are developing great civic spaces and parks: the riverfront, the Memorial, Myriad Gardens, and the new MAPS 3 Park. Our park system vision will develop and maintain those great spaces, complemented by an excellent level of service at the local neighborhood level and providing the linkages through greenways and trails that organize these facilities into a unified system.

"Public parks are not finished works of art when they are opened to the public. They are the evolving product of a living natural landscape and its interaction with the generations of people who use them."

- Alexander Garvin

**Our Goals**

**FUNDING, MAINTENANCE, AND OPERATIONS**

1. Oklahoma City's parks are funded, operated, and maintained in a way that gives people the amenities and park services they need in a safe and clean park environment.

**LEVELS OF SERVICE / PROGRAMMING NEEDS**

2. Parks in Oklahoma City have facilities, programming, amenities, and activities well-matched to the recreational needs of residents and visitors.

**ACCESSIBILITY AND USE**

3. Oklahoma City's park system is accessible to its users by a connected system including roadways, transit, trails, bicycle facilities, and sidewalks.

**SAFETY AND DESIGN**

4. Public and private parks are designed to achieve optimum safety, accessibility, and attractiveness while reflecting the character of the surrounding community.

**SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

5. Oklahoma City's park system provides multiple opportunities for people to enjoy a healthy lifestyle.

**Our Initiatives**

playokc Initiatives	playokc Goals				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Maximize efficiency by managing assets.	■	■			
2. Diversify park funding.	■				
3. Use private parks in developing areas.		■			
4. Align assets with community recreation needs.	■	■			■
5. Build multi-generational centers.		■			■
6. Provide appropriate levels of park service.		■			
7. Create a signature downtown park system.		■			
8. Provide good sidewalk, trail, and transit links.			■		
9. Design for safety.				■	
10. Use flexible, innovative, and sustainable designs and materials.				■	

**The funding, maintenance, and operational systems of Oklahoma City’s parks system ensure that citizens have the park services and amenities they need and the safe, clean, and pleasant park environment they deserve. Park service begins with adequate and reliable resources to maintain and operate existing facilities. The basic system must be usable and hospitable to its users. Using resources efficiently means monitoring the relevance of parks and park components to customers and their specific needs, and focusing on facilities and programs that have the greatest benefit per dollar spent.**



## INITIATIVE 1

### MAXIMIZE EFFICIENCY BY MANAGING ASSETS

**We will develop and implement a comprehensive asset management and maintenance system with sufficient funding to improve the park user's experience.** A systematic assessment of maintenance needs and priorities will help ensure that funds for operations and maintenance are both adequate and targeted to address key needs. This assessment begins with developing and maintaining a thorough inventory of the condition, with maintenance and replacement needs, of existing parks and facilities. It then establishes a maintenance standard and sets criteria and investment priorities to reach this level. Finally, the assessment should evaluate the deployment of maintenance staff and make adjustments to realize efficiencies. The overall process establishes adequate annual funding through the city's budget process to implement the management and maintenance program.

The Parks Master Plan recommends establishing a Mode II standard, as defined by the National Recreation and Parks Association. This standard, typical of peer cities, is associated with high-level maintenance of well developed park areas with reasonably high visitation.

**We will adapt park landscapes and facilities to minimize costs that are not necessary for the successful operation of the park or service to users.** High costs related to energy use, landscape maintenance, and obsolete facilities or materials do not benefit park users. In order to support increased maintenance funding, taxpayers must be convinced that funds are used in the most efficient way possible. This sometimes requires difficult choices, such as minimizing landscaped areas that unnecessarily require high cost and extensive maintenance, removing underutilized facilities, and disposing of unproductive parks so that resources can be concentrated in repairing facilities with highest use. Designed use of natural rather than manicured landscapes, climatically appropriate materials, and energy efficient technologies can reduce maintenance costs without compromising service to park users.

**Policies P-1, P-2, P-3, P-4, P-13, and L-4 implement this initiative.**

## INITIATIVE 2

### DIVERSIFY PARK FUNDING

**We will provide reliable and diversified funding for park development, capital improvement, maintenance, and operations.** In order to provide adequate resources for the park system, we must diversify funding sources beyond our current reliance on sales taxes. Because bonds and property taxes can



be used for capital projects, the most immediate need is for additional maintenance and operation funding. But a complete program must use a spectrum of techniques and a variety of partners. Diversification must be equitable to all parts of the city and not burden low-income households or any one particular group or constituency.

The Parks Master Plan presents a variety of options for various aspects of park development and operation. Sources for maintenance and operations include endowments, stormwater utility and impact fees, dedicated sales taxes, user fees, and private support. Land acquisition and capital development techniques include land dedication requirements and payments based on impact and demand created by projects, private park development, bond issues, dedication of easements, and private philanthropy.

**We will supplement public funding of park development and operations by building a network of partnerships with other public, nonprofit, and private agencies and organizations.** Budget constraints, state law that limits revenue sources for operations, the need to catch up on maintenance and replacement and keep up with growth, and other factors mean that city funding alone probably cannot provide the resources necessary to build, maintain, and operate the park system that Oklahoma City needs. Partnerships can provide the extra support and assistance that the system needs – as the Parks Master

Plan puts it, “they can help make the difference between a park system that struggles and one that sparkles.” The plan’s recommendations for partnerships include support organizations, corporate or health provider sponsorships, conservancies, a Parks Foundation, and advocacy groups. Conservancies have special value for iconic parks. A conservancy-like group supports Myriad Gardens. Other possibilities for conservancies include the four original parks for the 1910 Dunn Plan and the MAPS 3 Park in the Core to Shore district.

**Policies P-1, P-2, P-3, P-4, P-5, P-21, P-32, and SU-15 implement this initiative.**

## INITIATIVE 3

### USE PRIVATE PARKS IN DEVELOPING AREAS

**We will use private parks to meet local needs in certain settings in developing areas, subject to maintenance standards and commitments.** Parks, including neighborhood parks, have traditionally been part of civic life, open and welcome to the general public. On the other hand, smaller neighborhood parks are primarily used by residents of a specific local area and are increasingly difficult and expensive for a municipal parks department to develop and maintain. This leads to an increasing acceptance and even encouragement of private parks, controlled and maintained by the residents of a specific neighborhood or subdivision and not necessarily available to the general public.

The Parks Master Plan anticipates that most local park demands in new growth and rural areas will be met by private parks. Oklahoma City should accept the development of private parks as part of a program to meet level of service standards for these areas. However, public neighborhood parks should be developed as part of or adjacent to school sites, along trails and major pedestrian or bicycle routes, and along greenway corridors. New private parks, when developed, should follow specific management and maintenance standards.

**Policies P-7, P-9, P-13, and L-40 implement this initiative.**

**Facilities, programming, amenities, and activities should respond to the needs of residents and visitors. Park facilities should meet the needs of the people who live in the areas they serve, and adapt to changing demographics and user preferences. Facilities that were built decades ago may not appeal to current park users. The Parks Master Plan’s community survey offers guidance to contemporary preferences.**

## INITIATIVE 4

### ALIGN ASSETS WITH COMMUNITY RECREATION NEEDS

**We will maintain park assets to be consistent with community needs and constituencies, while maintaining the flexibility to adapt to future demographic changes.** The City should develop and implement a program to evaluate, improve, and sometimes replace park facilities to fit the needs of nearby the residents. This program will evaluate each park in the system for its ability to serve its constituency and set priorities for deficiencies. When neighborhoods change so that parks no longer meet their needs, the park should be replanned or put to a more appropriate use, possibly through redevelopment. Park master plans with phased implementation programs will be developed in partnership with neighborhoods in their service areas.

**We will develop and implement a plan for recreational services and programs tailored to community needs.** Park assets are only a part of the story. Park programming, the activities that actually take place within these assets, should also respond to community needs. Meeting the twin objectives of maximizing efficiency and service requires a program that identifies and strengthens core focuses for recreation efforts. Programs should include an emphasis on health and wellness. Recreational offerings should include close partnership and coordination with schools, health care providers, and other organizations.

**Policies P-6, P-10, P-11, P-12, and ST-9 implement this initiative.**



## CONSERVANCIES AND GREAT PARKS

Iconic public spaces like the High Line in New York (top) and Myriad Gardens (bottom) are often supported by conservancy-type private organizations.

## INITIATIVE 5

### BUILD MULTI-GENERATIONAL CENTERS

We will develop larger multi-generational community/recreation centers with good access to replace the current model of smaller centers in community parks. The community survey demonstrated a strong demand for indoor facilities that emphasize health and wellness, as well as other activities. Until now, the city has employed a model of many small, dispersed centers within community parks. Nationally, these older centers are being replaced by larger, better-equipped multi-generational facilities that offer more variety and quality of programming. These centers combine aquatics centers, adult and senior wellness, health and fitness, and even special event facilities in one package. Where feasible, the transition should make maximum use of existing investments. Sites for facilities should put a very high emphasis on multi-modal access, including pedestrian connections, on-street bicycle routes, multi-purpose trails, and frequent transit service.

Policy P-32 implements this initiative.

## INITIATIVE 6

### PROVIDE APPROPRIATE LEVELS OF PARK SERVICE

We will provide an appropriate level of service to citizens of all parts of the city. The Parks Master Plan identified level of service standards and deficits experienced by each of its four tiers. These level of service goals recognize that park service expectations are not the same for each tier. For example, central city areas with higher population densities, lower average household incomes, and less access to alternative facilities require (and should expect) a different level of service from rural areas with very low population and less dependence on the public recreation system.

We will provide full local park service in existing urban areas by filling current level of service gaps. Existing local and regional parks will provide most park services in developed areas. The City's new park

focus in these neighborhoods will concentrate on filling service gaps. The City should conduct a site selection and acquisition process for new park sites within areas that lack adequate local park service. Park sites should be considered for access and their ability to stabilize neighborhoods and encourage new private investment. A partnership of public funds through bond issues and private philanthropic contributions may provide financing for development of parks within these established, under-served neighborhoods, particularly when they are very dependent on public park service.

We will concentrate on developing regional public parks in developing areas and establish local parks through other means. Developing areas also require park service, but new park acquisition and development is difficult with limited capital and operational budgets. In these areas, with their lower population densities, the City's focus should be on regional parks, with their ability to serve a larger population. In developing areas, local parks should focus on joint use with school sites or along trails when using public funds for purchase and development. Local parks that serve specific neighborhood needs should be privately built and operated. Regional or public local park development in development areas may be funded in part through an impact fee, based on the proportionate park area demand generated by new households multiplied by a factor for acquisition and park development.

Policies P-8, P-10, P-11 P-14, P-15, P-19, P-20, P-21, ST-9, and SE-9 implement this initiative.

## INITIATIVE 7

### CREATE A SIGNATURE DOWNTOWN PARK SYSTEM

We will plan and develop a signature system of Downtown parks and open spaces to leverage economic development, promote quality of life, and enhance adjacent neighborhoods. Parks and open spaces are fundamental to Oklahoma City's drive to transform its center. The Oklahoma River project has converted an underutilized river to the greenway,



## TYPES OF PARKS IN OKLAHOMA CITY

The Parks Master Plan uses a classification system of parks to measure the level of park service provided for different parts of the city. It broadly classifies parks as "local" and "regional," based largely on the types of facilities they have and size of the areas they serve. A brief review of our park types follows:

### LOCAL PARKS



**Neighborhood Parks**  
Basic unit of our park system. Serves informal recreational needs of residents  
Recreational focus of neighborhoods  
In walking distance of homes  
Typical size: 5-20 acres  
Examples: Douglas, Harlow, Rotary



**Community Parks**  
Serve several adjoining neighborhoods  
Allow for group activities and larger scale recreation  
May have a recreation center or similar building  
Access by trails and major streets  
Typical size: 20-100 acres  
Examples: Edwards, Hefner, Wheeler



**School Parks**  
Schoolyards and recreation facilities  
Features geared toward age group of school  
Access by trails, sidewalks and low-volume streets  
Typical size: 5-30 acres  
Examples: Oakdale School, Council Grove Elementary, Northridge Elementary, Cleveland Elementary, and Central Elementary



**District Parks**  
Broader variety of purposes than local parks.  
Meet community-based needs  
Preserve unique landscapes and open spaces  
Access by trails, transit, major streets  
Typical size: 150-250 acres  
Examples: Douglass, Woodson



**Metropolitan Parks**  
Serve entire city  
Established around natural resources  
Wide variety of uses  
Clustering of active areas  
Revenue producing  
Typical size: 25-350 acres  
Examples: Bluff Creek, Overholser, Myriad Gardens



**Other Parks**  
Includes greenspace, greenways, nature parks, and special use parks  
No specific level of service standards  
Facilities may have special civic importance, be based on natural features, or be part of street features such as streetscapes or medians  
Example: Bicentennial Park

## LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS

The Parks Master Plan establishes service standards for three broad categories of facilities (local and regional parks, and trails) based on distance and service access for each level of service tier.

	Local	Regional	Trails
<b>Central City</b>	All residents within 1/2 mile sidewalk or trail-based walk of a local or regional park	All residents within a 2.5 mile drive of a regional park	All residents within 2.5 miles of a trail that is part of the citywide network
<b>Urban Area</b>	All residents within 1/2 mile sidewalk or trail-based walk of a local or regional park	All residents within a 5 mile drive of a regional park	All residents within 2.5 miles of a trail that is part of the citywide network
<b>Urban Growth Area</b>	All residents within one mile sidewalk or trail-based walk of a local or regional park	All residents within a 15 mile drive of a regional park	All residents within 5 miles of a trail that is part of the citywide network
<b>Rural Area</b>	All new residents within one mile sidewalk or trail-based walk of a local or regional park	All residents within a 30 mile drive of a regional park	All residents within 15 miles of a trail that is part of the citywide network



trail, and recreation system that has become a trademark feature for the city. The Core to Shore development program uses a connected network of parks and public spaces, featuring the 40-acre MAPS 3 Park, as the catalyst for a massive redevelopment project that will bring new neighborhoods and jobs to the center of the city. Completion of this system, supported by excellent maintenance and event programming, will realize the potential of this unique system. But in addition to serving the needs of adjacent new neighborhoods, the downtown park system can serve the needs of adjacent neighborhoods, especially areas like Capitol Hill and other adjacent southside neighborhoods. These areas should be connected to the riverfront and downtown systems by a combination of trails, complete street routes with excellent pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, and frequent transit service.

Policy P-13 implements this initiative.

**Good service requires more than the distribution of parks within a service area. It must be easy and safe to get to those parks. Good connections to parks provide independence and access to both young people and older adults – the two groups who most need public park and recreation facilities. In thinking about access, we must also consider the nature of the trip and possible barriers along the way.**

### INITIATIVE 8

#### PROVIDE GOOD SIDEWALK, TRAIL, AND TRANSIT LINKS TO PARKS

We will provide complete sidewalk networks to serve local parks. People within the realistic walking radius (or “walkshed”) of a local park should have pedestrian facilities – sidewalks, paths, or trails – that connect to that park. Creating such a pedestrian web around parks includes:

- Analyzing sidewalk coverage within the walkshed, (½ mile for neighborhood parks and one mile for community parks) for interruptions and barriers.

- Evaluating current park access points and their relationship to the pedestrian system.
- Establishing priority routes to parks and focusing funding on closing gaps and removing barriers, including intersection design issues.
- Providing signage and wayfinding information to direct users to parks destinations.
- Within new developments, require street patterns and pedestrian links that provide direct routes to private parks, school parks, and public trails.

We will complete trails to serve all parts of Oklahoma City to meet the community priority placed on trails and increase access to parks. As discussed in connection, trails are both a recreational and transportation resource. The basic trail system identified by the Parks Master Plan included four major phases of trail development:

- The existing trail system.
- Programmed trails, including the MAPS 3 trails and a Katy Trail extension.
- Near-term off-street trails, connecting the trail core to outlying parts of the urban area.
- Long-term off-street trails, extending the city system to the periphery of Oklahoma City.

The programmed system should be completed by 2020, by which time priorities should be set for completion of the longer-term system components. The ability to provide park access should be a strong factor in setting priorities.

Other trail-related actions should include:

- Designating on-street routes that connect neighborhoods to trail access points. These routes should focus on low-volume, direct streets that include continuous sidewalks and pavement markings.
- Requiring developments to dedicate trail segments designated by the trails master plan.
- Enhancing the recreational trail experience with landscaping, fitness facilities, wayfinding signage, rest areas, and other amenities.

We will improve the usefulness of transit as a way of getting to parks. Parks can be hard to serve by transit because they rarely generate the trip volume at specific times that help support service. However, we can take steps that help transit service adapt to park needs. Directions include increasing service on potential high-volume routes that serve major park and recreation facilities, and locating new investments, such as multi-generational centers, on sites with good transit service. We also should be open to transportation solutions other than fixed route transit. Examples are special services or brokering of other transportation providers to serve time specific needs, such as after school service to a major recreation facility.

Policies P-8, P-13, P-15, P-16, P-17, P-18, SU-8, C-15, C-17, and C-26 implement this initiative.

**Our parks must provide safe, secure, and attractive environments for the use and enjoyment of our citizens and visitors. Common sense design practices can increase the security that our facilities offer and make them easier to maintain in good condition.**



### INITIATIVE 9

#### DESIGN FOR SAFETY

We will continue and expand our program to locate, plan, and build our parks for safety. When new parks are developed, their initial planning should include an assessment of security needs. Locations should have good street exposure and visibility. Park design and programming should be guided by the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principles, which uses design to maximize public safety.

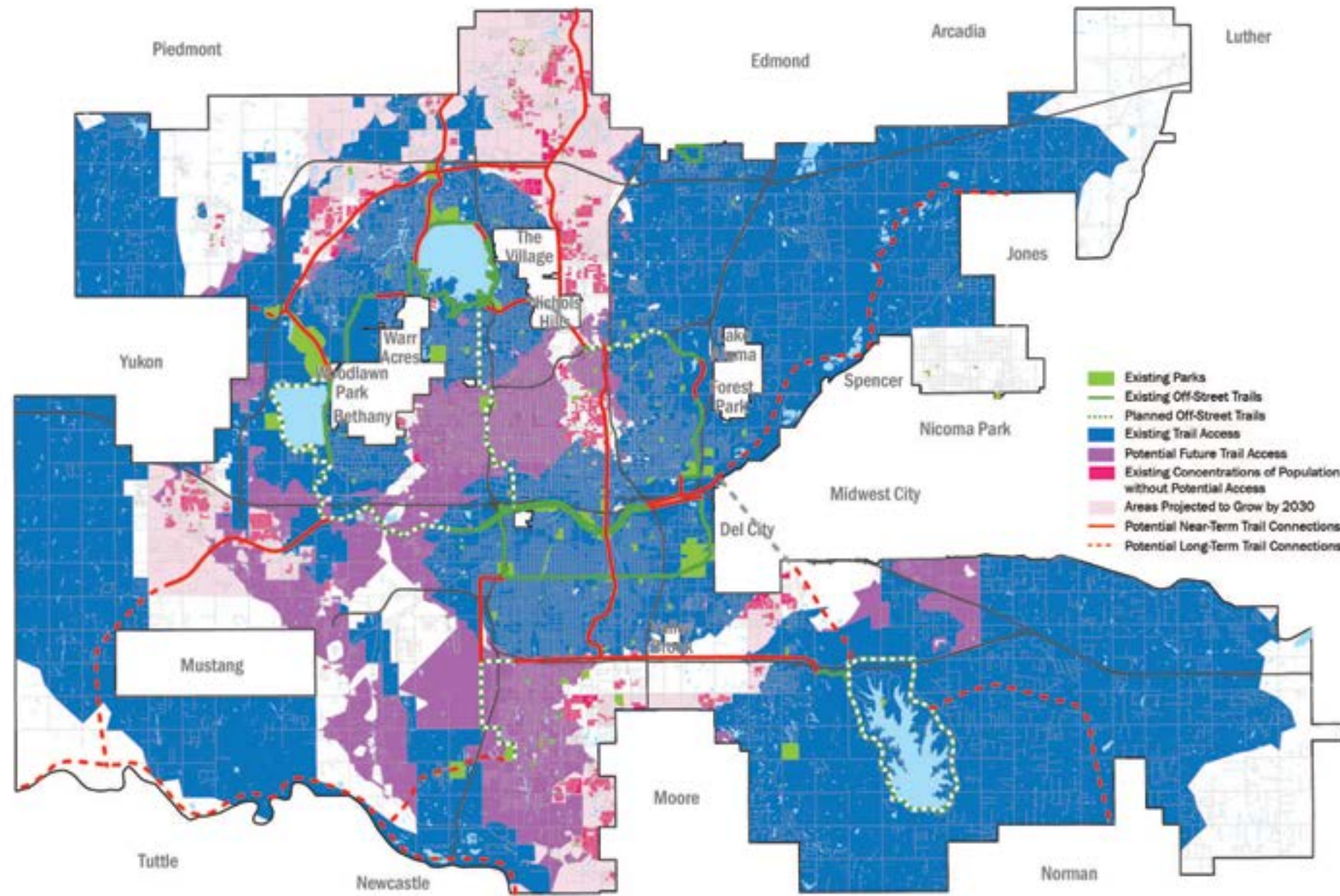
Policies P-22, P-23, P-29, P-30, P-31, C-18, L-3, L-8, SE-1, and SE-4 implement this initiative.

APPROPRIATE LEVELS OF SERVICE  
**37%** of 2013 Community Survey respondents do not use parks and recreation facilities because they do not know what is being offered, and nearly a third say they are too far from home.

*Parks Master Plan (2013)*



## TRAIL ACCESS



## INITIATIVE 10

### USE FLEXIBLE, INNOVATIVE, AND SUSTAINABLE DESIGNS AND MATERIALS

We will use design features and materials that are attractive, economical, and sustainable in the long run, and recognize that parks are a canvas for human activity. Ultimately, parks are for and about their users and, except in rare circumstances, are brought to life by the people and the activities within them. Therefore, park design should maintain the flexibility to adapt and change – to be places for play, exploration, gardens, art, thinking, running, informal games, room for creativity and improvisation – without getting in the way of their users. And, as they change, they should use materials that work well and remain sustainable for the long run. For example, native plant materials may require some time and care to become established, but will save money and create more attractive and hardy landscapes over the long haul. Good and flexible design, public safety, social space, and environmental quality should converge as we rehabilitate existing parks and contemplate new ones.

Policies P-24, P-25, P-26, P-27, P-28, P-29, P-30, G-12, G-13, and G-22 implement this initiative.

"Sir Joseph Duveen, perhaps the most spectacular art dealer who ever lived, always said of the value of a great work of art, 'When you pay high for the priceless, you're getting it cheap.' The same is true of a public park."

- Alexander Garvin  
*Public Parks: The Key to Livable Communities*

