

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Nashville's park system, the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County has initiated development of a Metropolitan Parks and Greenways Master Plan. This Master Plan represents the first effort to comprehensively document the existing park and recreation resources and facilities as well as the current greenway efforts. The Master Plan will guide future development of the parks and greenways system to meet the changing recreation needs of Nashville and Davidson County residents and will help to protect important natural and cultural resources and valuable open spaces throughout the County.

### **1.1 THE BENEFITS OF PARKS AND GREENWAYS**

An integrated network of parks and open spaces linked by greenways provides Nashville and Davidson County with numerous benefits:

#### ***Recreation – Providing places for us to play***

Parks and recreational programs provide opportunities for exercise and participation in organized sports, offer a place for social gatherings among community residents, and encourage constructive activities for children.

#### ***Water Quality and Stormwater Management – Cleaning our water***

Conservation of forest and woodland areas around stream corridors provides important buffers that help prevent erosion of streambanks, slow the rate of stormwater runoff, and improve the cleanliness of water bodies by filtering pollutants from water flowing from rooftops and across paved areas

#### ***Wildlife Habitat – Nurturing our wildlife***

Parkland and open space networks provide habitat for birds and other animals and supply important corridors for wildlife migration and movement.

#### ***Air Quality – Cleaning our air***

Trees and other vegetation in parks improve air quality by filtering pollutants from the air and absorbing carbon dioxide and other gases that may contribute to global warming.

#### ***Alternative Transportation – Keeping us moving***

Providing networks of parks and greenways with paved trails encourages residents to consider bicycling or in-line skating as an alternative to driving their cars to work or play.

### **Community Appearance and Character – *Improving our neighborhoods***

Parks improve the overall appearance of neighborhoods and generally positively impact property values in adjoining areas. Parks can also serve as a gathering place for neighborhood residents and can offer a place for members of the community to express their unique cultural identity.

### **Education – *Connecting people to nature and our heritage***

Parks enable residents to escape from the stresses of everyday life and interact with nature. Programs on nature and the environment increase awareness about the importance of the natural world to a high quality of life and inspire residents to help protect the land. In addition, parks help preserve important cultural landscapes and historic buildings and serve to teach residents about their cultural heritage.

## **1.2 PLANNING PROCESS**

Preparation of the Metropolitan Parks and Greenways Master Plan has relied heavily on input from residents of Nashville and Davidson County throughout the planning process. Three rounds of public meetings have been included in the process to obtain citizen input. In addition, a telephone survey was conducted to obtain input from residents who may not attend a public meeting.

A Citizens Advisory Committee, consisting of approximately 20 individuals representing diverse interests throughout Nashville and Davidson County, has helped to develop a vision with defined goals and objectives to guide the parks and greenways system in the future.

The planning process has included five major phases:

- Inventory and Analysis
- Needs Assessment
- Mission, Vision and Goals
- Recommendations and Plan Options
- Master Plan Development

***Inventory and Analysis:*** During the inventory and analysis phase, the planning team collected and evaluated background information on natural and cultural resources; the planning and demographic conditions in the City of Nashville, Davidson County, and the region; park facilities and programs; and park administration and finance. The results of this work are presented in this document.

**Needs Assessment:** Following the Inventory and Analysis, an assessment of four different and complementary types of park and recreation needs was conducted:

- **Expressed Needs:** Types of recreational activities already being enjoyed for which there is additional perceived need
- **Latent Needs:** Activities currently not being met by the park system
- **Comparative Needs:** Needs suggested by comparison with services provided in communities with similar physical, cultural and socio-economic characteristics
- **Normative Needs:** Needs as defined by published standards of the National Recreation and Parks Association, Urban Land Institute, and others adjusted to the particular circumstances of Nashville and Davidson County

Each of these needs were identified through analysis of the inventory and analysis information, interviews of persons with a specific knowledge of or stake in the parks, and input received from a series of public meetings. Additionally, a telephone survey of Nashville and Davidson County residents was conducted to collect park-related information. Findings of the needs assessment have provided the foundation for standards and criteria expressed in the Master Plan that are specifically relevant to Nashville and Davidson County.

**Mission Statement / Vision for the Future / Goals and Objectives:** In this phase of the planning process, the existing departmental mission statement was reevaluated and revised. In addition, the planning team assisted the Citizens Advisory Committee with developing a Vision for the Future of the parks and greenways system. A policy framework composed of a series of general goals and objectives was then developed to provide broad direction for development and evolution of the parks and greenways system. This policy framework addresses parks, greenways, open space, recreation facilities, and recreation programs.

**Alternative Options for the Future:** After defining the new mission, vision and goals, the planning team identified various options to provide for present and future needs of Nashville and Davidson County residents for parks, recreation, and greenways.

**Master Plan Development:** In this phase, the recommendations and options from the previous phase were developed into the full Master Plan. Order of magnitude cost estimates for capital expenditures were developed based on the assessment of current conditions and the programmatic needs. Facilities and programs were prioritized and development actions framed according to criteria such as: under-served, existing needs; needs based on changing demographics and participation trends; and needs of special population groups.

### 1.3 SUPPORTING TECHNICAL STUDIES COMPLETED AS PART OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

Collecting and analyzing background information on park facilities and programs; natural and cultural resources; and other topics relevant to the Nashville and Davidson County parks and greenways system was the first component of the master planning process. This provided the foundation needed to guide development of the Vision for the Future, the goals, recommended actions, and an implementation program. In the future, it will continue to serve as a resource for use by decision-makers to guide management of the parks and greenways system. Findings are compiled in the ***Existing Conditions Report***. This report provides a “snapshot” of existing conditions and issues associated with the parks system as of the summer of 2001.

Additional technical studies completed as part of the Master Plan process that were used to complete the ***Existing Conditions Report*** are bound separately in the ***Background Materials*** document. They include:

- ***Recreation Needs Assessment***
- ***Park Facility Assessment***
- ***Architectural Assessment***
- ***Playground Assessment***
- ***Market Research Study***
- ***Park Facility Sheets (Existing Conditions, Assessment and Recommendations for Specific Parks)***
- ***Public Meeting Summaries***