



METRO
Parks

Buechel Park Master Plan

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1. PARK HISTORY & OVERVIEW

Buechel Park is one of 123 parks in the Parks Metro Louisville system. The park was constructed in 1973 on approximately 16 acres of floodplain along a tributary branch of the South Fork Beargrass Creek named Buechel Branch. Buechel Park is a neighborhood park and is located in the 11th District of the Metro Council currently represented by Councilman Kevin Kramer. The park is bordered by neighborhoods including primary Buechel Terrace and Twilight subdivisions and in close proximity to Fredricks Acres, Breckinridge Meadow, Winter Park, Dohert Manor, and Byers Manor subdivisions. The park is bordered to the north by Norfolk Southern Railroad which separates the park from nearby Six Mile Trace, Midland Terrace and Kendrick Court



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subdivisions. The Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) constructed a regional storm water detention facility at the southwest border of the park in 2004.

The main entrance to Buechel Park is located at the terminus of Beargrass Avenue which links the park to US 31 (Bardstown Road) just southeast of Buechel Bypass and Old Bardstown Road. Secondary entrances are located at the terminuses of Bonnie Lane and Granville Drive.

Since 1980, the Buechel community has experienced cultural changes. Buechel was originally a Caucasian blue collar suburb which provided housing in close proximity to large Louisville industry, including the General Electric manufacturing plant and Ford Assembly Plant. Today the community is much more segregated and culturally mixed including African American, Hispanic and Asian populations.

This Master Plan is prepared to identify current and future recreational needs within the community, to assist in guiding future improvements and park development. The plan is based on meetings with District 11, an analysis of current park conditions and user input. A user questionnaire survey and two public meetings were conducted to invite user concerns for the future development of Buechel Park. The majority of base data is provided by the Louisville/Jefferson County Information Consortium (LOJIC), historical records from Louisville Metro Parks, Flood Insurance Rate Maps, United States Army Corp of Engineers and the Soil Survey for Jefferson County, Kentucky prepared by the United States Soil Conservation Service.

2. PARK INVENTORY (See Existing Site Conditions photos, Exhibit 1)

Existing park facilities include three vehicular parking areas, a playground, one picnic area with shelter and grill, three tennis courts, basketball courts, two softball fields and a walking path. (Refer to Exhibit #2 for Inventory / Analysis).

Vehicular Access

- Primary access to the park is by walkers and bicyclist from adjacent surrounding neighborhoods. There is a lack of adequate sidewalks connecting these neighborhoods to the park and these users are forced to share narrow street corridors with vehicular traffic often with cars parked along the street. Safe pedestrian access to and from the park, although outside the scope of this study, should be addressed in the future.
- Three asphalt parking areas are provided for users driving to the park. The main parking lot is located at the terminus of Beargrass Avenue which is also the entrance to the park and provides parking for 31 cars. The second parking lot is located at the terminus of Granville Drive and has facilities for 22 vehicles and the third area is located at the terminus of Bonnie Lane and provides 8 parking



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stalls. There is no direct connection between the parking areas and access between them is long and difficult for park users unfamiliar with the surrounding area.

- Parking lot surfaces are in fair condition containing a few structural cracks and low pooling areas which drain poorly. Striping is worn and faded and parking stalls need to be remarked.
- Parking areas are barricaded by deteriorating wooden timber bollards. Many of these bollards are splintering and have been pushed out of plumb and present some safety concern for park users.
- Parking lot lighting is minimal and raises security issues at the park. Poor illumination levels provide opportunities for illicit teenage activity, vandalism and increases safety concerns for nearby residence.

Pedestrian Circulation

- Lack of adequate pedestrian and bicycle routes to and from the park needs further study.
- Internal park circulation consists of a four foot wide concrete path which begins at the main Beargrass Avenue parking area and circles the park connecting the various recreational areas.
- The concrete walk is adequate for walking users only and is too narrow to safely accommodate multiple users.
- The path is in poor condition with many cracks and buckling areas. Many repairs have been made to the existing concrete however many trip hazards are present along the path.
- There are two foot bridges along the path which provide access across the existing stream. The existing wooden bridge is deteriorating and will need to be replaced in the near future. The second bridge is a concrete culvert crossing in good condition. Both bridges are too narrow to accommodate large maintenance equipment.

Recreational Facilities

- The four tennis courts are in fair condition. Several structural cracks in the asphalt surface need repair and the fencing is beginning to rust. New nets were recently added to the courts.



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- The two basketball courts in fair condition. The court surface is concrete and contains a few cracks. Court markings are faded and need to be restriped. New backboards, goals and nets were recently installed.
- Two softball fields with chain link backstops are in poor condition. The backstops are rusting and needs recoating or replacement. The infields are worn, poorly drained and should be regraded. Pitching mounds and base plates are non-existent.
- There are remnants of an old cricket pitch site located between the two softball fields. It is believed there were a group of nearby residence who played cricket at the park.
- The playground includes a tot lot which was recently added. The playground equipment is in fair to good condition, needing additional mulch resurfacing.
- The gazebo picnic shelter includes one barbeque grill, several picnic tables, trash receptacles, and a nearby drinking fountain. The grill and gazebo are in good condition however the picnic tables are deteriorating and should be replaced. The trash receptacles are 55 gallon painted steel drums without lids to deter animal intrusion. The receptacles, although functional, lack aesthetic appeal. The drinking fountains are in operable condition.
- Security lighting is needed near the existing gazebo, picnic area and playground to deter vandalism.
- Seating areas are few and uninviting, lacking a hard surface connection to the existing path. Bench pads are too small with poor gradient relationship to the path. Additional seating areas are needed and should be considered for passive recreational needs.

Existing Signage

- There is one park identification approximately 4'x6' located at the main entrance at Beargrass Avenue. A smaller sign of similar shape is also located at this entrance which identifies park rules.
- These signs, although in good condition, are dated and lack appeal and are poorly located behind the parking lot. Visibility of signage will be blocked from the entrance when the parking lot is full.
- Offsite signage is minimal and easily missed. One small street sign is located along Bardstown Road near Beargrass Avenue pointing in the direction of the



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park. This sign is difficult to see and is lost in the visual clutter along Bardstown Road.

Soils

- Newark Silt Loam (Ne) comprise approximately 75% of the park site primarily along Buechel Branch. These soils are poorly drained and normally located along streams and rivers of limestone origin. Newark series soils have high moisture retention yet present low erosion potential.
- Crider Silt Loam (CsB) are located on the higher elevations in park which include the Beargrass Avenue and Bonnie Lane entrance locations, picnic area and playground locations. Crider soils are of limestone origin and are moderately drained and well suited for woodland and wildlife production.

Drainage

- The site is located in the floodplain of Buechel Branch, a tributary to Beargrass Creek, and is subject to season flooding. (See Flood Insurance Rate Map; Exhibit 3).
- All storm water runoff from the site flows to Buechel Branch, which traverses the park from east to west. A small spring is located just southeast and upstream of the park and provides perennial water flow for most of the year.
- A regional storm water detention facility was recently constructed by MSD just southwest and downstream from the park. A gravel access path is located at the top of the bank along the entire circumference of the basin and could become an extension of the current walking path.
- Stream bank erosion is minimum although the deep incised channel, lack of stream meandering and lack of native vegetation create a man made open ditch appearance with little visual attractiveness.

Vegetation

- Most of the native vegetation within the park was cleared for construction of recreational areas. A healthy stand of mature native trees provides welcomed shade for the picnic pavilion and playground areas.
- Much of the remaining vegetation consists of oak trees and ash trees planted after initial park construction.
- There are some scrub trees and shrubbery overgrowth providing adequate buffering from the adjoining railroad tracks.
- Many trees within the park are either dead or need to be deadwooded and pruned. These current conditions present safety concerns for park users.



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- The existing stream has very little native riparian vegetation perhaps due to current maintenance practice which include mowing lawns up to the top of the stream bank. Lack of riparian vegetation expedites bank erosion.

3. PUBLIC INPUT/USER ISSUES



Aerial view of Buechel Park

User Survey/ Questionnaire

The Master Plan began with a solicitation from Metro Parks staff to the general public in District 11 as a questionnaire about multiple issues and concerns for Buechel Park. The questionnaire was issued to gather the park user's comments on specific items such as safety, facility condition, maintenance, visitation, activities, etc. The surveys were then given to the consultant for review of the issues, concerns and wish list from the neighborhood and park users, and then organized in a format to summarize the primary components and program for the development of the Master Plan. (See Exhibit 4, User Survey)



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The color shaded lines were the most popular concern addressed by respondents to the questionnaire.

The park is used primarily by the surrounding neighborhoods of Buechel Terrace and zip codes 40218, 40220 and 40228. Since the park is surrounded by homes, tucked well within an existing neighborhood, the park can be classified as a neighborhood park, and not a metro or regional destination type park. Most of the users live within walking distance, which is reflective of the responses in the survey. Over 60% of park users either walk or ride bicycles as opposed to 39% that drive to the park. No respondents' utilized public transportation (TARC) which further reinforces the fact that the park does not attract users from outside the adjacent neighborhoods. Over 46% of the users frequent the park weekly, with the remainder using the park monthly or a few times a year. Most of the features that park users like about the park are the fact that it is a neighborhood park within walking distance, with walking paths, playgrounds and ball fields.

Activities include walking or jogging, walking dogs, bringing children to the playground areas, and sitting on benches or picnic areas. The most popular active recreational use is tennis. Additional activities or events mentioned were organized activities such as concerts, festivals or a farmer's market.

The biggest areas of concern and items that are in need of improvement are security, better maintenance, lack of seating, better drainage, poor lighting and lack of restroom facilities.

Public Meeting #1

The first of two public meetings was held with the Buechel Terrace neighborhood association at the Buechel Fire House on Tuesday April 18th. The goal of the first meeting was to review the results from the questionnaire and review the recommended program that would begin to suggest future improvements and enhancements to Buechel Park. (See Program Summary, Exhibit 5)

The following program was prepared for and presented during the meeting to create discussion and draw comments from the public for the future of the Park:

- Multi Purpose Building
 - Restrooms
 - Water fountains
 - Concessions
 - Concerts/Special Events
- Extended path along stream to the retention basin (700LF+/-)
 - Prefab bridge over stream
 - Prefab bridge across spillway



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- Improve stream bank, add rock/boulders, and edge planting along stream for aesthetic enhancements
- New fencing and surfacing for tennis courts
- Re-graded ball fields to accommodate soccer/football
- Two new picnic gazebos
- Add benches (8-10) and picnic tables (7)
- New pedestrian pathway lighting (original loop only) (25 fixtures @ 80'o.c.)
- Resurface and re-stripe parking areas
- Vehicular gates at parking entrances (to be locked after hours of operation)
- Strengthen planting buffer along Railroad corridor and evergreen screening around park
- Additional tree planting (30-40 shade trees and 40-50 evergreens)

Although there was no strong reaction to the items presented, the discussion focused on the following topics.

- Vehicle access needs to be restricted to the three parking areas only.
- Tennis was identified as the most popular sport from the user survey, therefore this amenity should be improved and maintained.
- Ball fields need better maintenance which may attract more use. Presently, there are no organized leagues that use the fields. The fields are mostly used as practice field sites.
- Sidewalk/path conditions are poor and need repair.
- Light levels for security need improvement, especially in the parking areas and the gazebo location.
- Path lights are not desired. Lighting should be restricted to the parking and high use areas such as the playground area.
- There was a strong consensus to maintaining and keeping the existing park safe and clean before additional improvements are implemented.

Public Meeting #2

The second public meeting was held on Tuesday evening on June 20th, 2006. The purpose of the final public meeting was to present the preliminary Master Plan that was prepared based on the results of the user surveys, and discussions and comments from the first public meeting on April 18th, prior to review and comments from Metro Park staff.

The plan was well received by the group with little to no opposition on the proposed additions and improvements. The primary improvements were rated in order of importance by the group in an effort to prioritize objectives for future funding consideration:



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Public Discussion

	<u>Priority Rate</u>
✓ Ballfield improvements	High
▪ Lighting?	
▪ Extends useable period	
▪ Use during later hours	
✓ Stream corridor improvements	High
▪ MGMT responsibility assignment (parks or MSD)	
✓ Playground	Medium-High
▪ Expansion area is historic location	
✓ Park lighting	High
▪ For security	
▪ Walking path	Low
✓ Detention basin	Medium
▪ Playfield	
▪ Extend walking path and connect	
✓ Skating opportunity	Low
▪ Better than on streets	
✓ Restrooms	Medium-Low
▪ Schools would use park more	
▪ Day care would use park more	
▪ If MAINTAINED well	
▪ Expect a high vandalism rate	
✓ Shelters	High
▪ Picnic tables, benches	



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Preliminary Master Plan (See Exhibit #5)

4. DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

The following components of the Master Plan are identified below in order of importance and priority. The order is based on review with District 11, user response to the survey and public meeting forums to discuss the Master Plan with the general public. Once priorities were identified the Master Plan was divided into four phases based on priority, current conditions and safety for park users.

Phase 1 improvements include components with the highest level of priority and restorative needs to maintain a safe and attractive environment for park users. Phase 1 further addresses safety and vandalism concerns at the park.

Phase 2 improvements address a secondary level of priority and include components with a high level of importance but with less urgency. Phase 2 components consist mainly of desirable new and expanded park amenities.

Phase 3 improvements include components with lower priority and urgency but are important conditions and amenities of the overall Master Plan.

Phase 4 improvements include those components identified in the Master Plan as desirable however are not critical amenities to the future success of the park.



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PHASE I IMPROVEMENTS

1. Lighting improvements
 - a. New light standard in parking to increase illumination levels and increase security.
 - b. Security lighting for the playground and picnic areas to deter vandalism.
2. Tennis court improvements
 - a. Renovate court surfaces and repair of structural cracks.
 - b. Replace fencing.
3. Basketball court renovation
 - a. Court resurfacing and repair of structural cracks.
 - b. Repaint court boundaries.
4. Recreational field renovation
 - a. Regrade baseball fields to improve drainage.
 - b. Renovate baseball diamonds to Little League design standards which can also be utilized for softball play.
 - c. Regrade areas between the baseball fields for multi-use sport field and drainage improvements.

PHASE 2 IMPROVEMENTS

5. Stream enhancement
 - a. Reconstruct channel by adding boulders, pools and riffles to improve water quality and aquatic habitat.
 - b. Stabilize steam banks by planting new native riparian vegetation along the stream.
 - c. Add "no-mow zones" along the stream corridor. Plantings to include meadow grasses for aesthetic enhancement and soil erosion protection of the riparian areas.
6. New picnic area and renovation of existing structure
 - a. New picnic shelter with tables, grills, trash receptacle, and potable water foundation.
 - b. Additional benches in the picnic and playground areas.
 - c. Additional grills in the existing picnic area.



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PHASE 3 IMPROVEMENTS

7. New restroom facility
 - a. Construct a new restroom facility in the vicinity of the playground and picnic areas.
8. Parking lot improvements
 - a. Expansion of the Beargrass Avenue lot to include additional parking for 20 vehicles.
 - b. Resurface and restripe existing bituminous parking surfaces.
 - c. Replace timber bollards.
9. New detention basin trail
 - a. Construct 2 new foot bridges to access the existing 0.45 mile gravel path around the detention basin.
 - b. New 0.15 mi. connecting concrete walk between the park and the gravel detention basin trail.

PHASE 4 IMPROVEMENTS – FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

1. Expansion and replacement of playground equipment and structures.
2. Reconstruction of the existing walking path to increase width from 4 to 8 feet to accommodate multiple use activities.
3. Replace park signage with new upgraded materials and modern graphics.
4. Replace existing footbridges over stream utilizing consistent and native construction materials.
5. Improve the vegetative buffer which screens the railroad and adjacent housing.

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